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THE SMART SET

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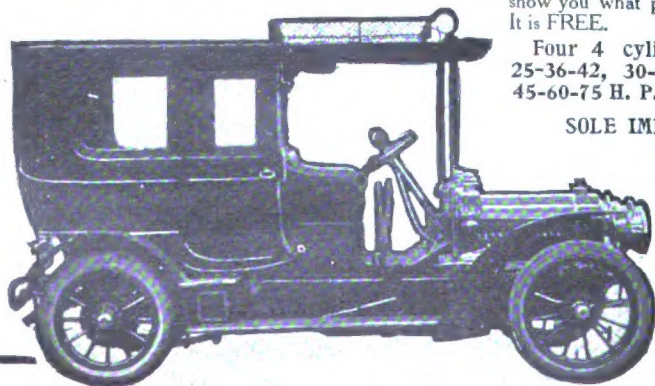
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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXI

APRIL, 1907

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THE MAY "SMART SET"

The leading feature of the forthcoming number will be a story of Japan from one of the most brilliant writers of the day—the author of "The Breath of the Gods" and "Truth Dexter." The story is entitled,

"CUPID SAN" By Mary Fenollosa

No reader should miss this delightful love-story.

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Two essays will appear, one by Channing Pollock dealing with "The Smart Set on the Stage," and another by Maurice Francis Egan called, "The Artistic Temperament."

The poetry will be by Clinton Scollard, Virginia Woodward Cloud, Arthur Stringer, Theodosia Garrison, Ethel M. Kelley, William H. Hayne, John Vance Cheney, Aloysius Coll and others.

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THE MINIATURE

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

I

THE studio and artist were both of a dull gray humor when Cressida knocked and entered in response to the absently-spoken admittance.

All day it had rained, and though rain in Paris is not half so bad as it is in thousands of other places, today it had been a depressing sort of a drizzle, unimpassioned by the slightest breeze and consequently unenlivened by the myriad comedies of a windy day. Not that the sole occupant of this peculiar studio would have known it had the *en tout cas* of Mademoiselle Henriette been laughably turned inside out under his very windows, or the red petticoat of the *concierge* been elevated to show the very knees of her stout, willing legs. He had not been near the window all morning, disliking the sight of the slipperiness, dreary, empty street, and fearing its encouraging effect upon his sad humor.

Yet the gloom of the day had had its sad effect upon him nevertheless, stealing in through the half-sealed construction, breathing dejected mists upon the north light, filling the half-luxurious, half-barnlike *atelier* with damp discomfort.

Arlan Ben Witter was not rheumatic, but he was in love, and nobody was in love with him, unless one count the pale little Juliette who brought in his *déjeuner* from Farrère's. And the dreariness of the weather had done its utmost to convince him that Cressida Predmore did not care for him and never would.

There was nothing more difficult for Witter than to be in love with one woman and to be painting the portrait of another. As many times as he had been in love—and as he was now thirty-five it was not an inconsiderable total—he had found it so, except on that one occasion when he had been madly infatuated with Lady Honoria Cheltenham and privileged to paint the miniature of her twin sister, Daphne, who so closely resembled his ladylove as to be quite a comfort. But that had been the philandering passion of a young man, the fluttering touch of the butterfly above the flower, whereas now he likened himself prosaically to a bee, hungry for the deeper honey of one sweet rose.

It had been hard for him, while Sidney Wayne had sat before him in all her matured perfection, not to turn his fairy-like brushes, as well as his eyes, to the appreciation of the slender, blossoming beauty of the younger Cressida as she sat silently, almost motionless, in the deep window-seat during her cousin's sittings, reading intently or almost as absorbedly staring out at the world or the world's occupants. He had almost caught himself changing that soft, dark, waving hair, so exquisitely portrayed upon the ivory, to a deep coppery gold, simply parted and knotted at the back of the slender girl throat. He had opportunely become aware of deep violets and clear blues in the hair threads of his tools, when he was painting at the sweet brown darkness of Mrs. Wayne's worldly eyes. It had been a constant danger and temptation that

only long nights before a big canvas and almost painful concentration of memory had helped to annul; and yet he found after the hours spent in eager solitude before her portrait that his eyes strayed more often than ever in her direction for confirmation of what seemed to be dreams of unbelievable beauty, although his brushes were faithful to the task before him.

He was a conscientious worker, Arlan Ben Witter, and ever indulged in qualms of uncertainty before the declaration of ultimate completion that heralded the transfer of a piece of his alchemized ivory. So now, although he could find no fault with it, he sat before the miniature of Mrs. Gregory Wayne, unwilling to say that it was finished. To do him justice, the fact that this announcement was the herald of long days when he would not see Cressida had no place in his appraisal of his work. Surely she did not dislike him; surely she would let him visit her among her other friends! As to that he was utterly confident. Nor could he doubt—so hopeful is the human genus—that she would often again sit at the window reading or talking or doing neither in that calm absorption that was on occasion hers, while he could study the unmetallic burnish of her hair and the strong, soft modeling of her sweet face.

But Mrs. Wayne would be with him in a moment, and was he to declare the portrait to contain every power, skill and insight that his fingers and eyes and soul possessed? He stared at it appraisingly and answered with an almost unconscious "*Entrez!*" the unstartling rapping at the door.

It was the faint, uncertain exclamation that made him turn about.

"Oh—Mrs. Wayne isn't here?" The question came after he had seen Cressida and risen. She came forward a little and again hesitated.

"Not yet; I am expecting her at any moment."

She seemed ill at ease, perhaps divining with a woman's occasional insight that her being alone with him in this way would precipitate the

situation she understood and dreaded to face. She came nearer yet, keeping her eyes on the miniature, as if by so doing she could deflect his attention to it and avert the bridging of the space between them.

"I was to meet her here at two o'clock," she said, "and I am myself a little late."

He was spared the knowledge that she had loitered about in a shop where she saw nothing she either could or would purchase for the mere purpose of allowing Sidney a chance to precede her at the appointment.

"Is the miniature really finished?"

He infused a personal note into the query as a clumsy lover loves to do. "Had it seemed so long in the process—to you?" he asked.

She moved a little uneasily. "Not at all—it is only marvelous to me that such a thing is ever finished before your eyes and your patience give out." There was a little awkward pause, during which she was pretending to regard it most critically, keeping it between them figuratively as if its slender oval delicacy were a steely shield. "Do you know," she said, merely for the sake of saying something, "it seems to me that the lid of the left eye droops more than the right—it gives an odd look to the face. Am I wrong—or do you see it, too?"

Arlan Ben Witter took his eyes from her own flushing, sensitive face and looked obediently where she bade him. "Perhaps you are right," he admitted after a pause.

She heard in his tone his entire inattention to the subject, and more distressed than ever moved over to the window, as if by watching for Sidney she could hasten her arrival.

The time that elapsed between her installing herself there at the window and his joining her seemed only to emphasize their inability to be natural with each other. She was the woman dreading the unburdening of his desire; he was the man fearing to put it to the touch to win or lose it all.

He stood a few moments looking at her as she sat against the background

of wet gray glass, the many-toned gray and green cushions of the couch about her, growing out of them in her deep russet-red gown as a nasturtium blossom more crimson than the rest will blazon its richer beauty against the neutral background of silvery leaves. He saw that her hand in its slender suède glove trembled on her knee; he noticed the intent hopefulness of her look into the street. And yet, although it was borne to him by these tokens that she sought to avoid the understanding that must come between them, he did not despair of gaining her ultimate consideration. He was young—she was a great deal more young than he. They could afford to wait. He was successful, it was true, but he had not as much yet as he hoped to give her. And although she now neither loved him nor wanted to, unless she did centre her lovely hopes on some other, he would not be made to despair of winning her in the end.

As she sat there at his window in the half-dull, half-brilliant apartment, so he hoped to see her in the future, always and forever sharing with him alone the brightly colored and the dim gray days that are the portion of every man.

He approached her slowly, watching the color deepen in her cheek at his every step. When he was quite close to her she moved nervously.

"What a dreary day!" she said. "Perhaps Sidney is not coming. Perhaps I would better go." He knew by her voice that this had just occurred to her. She repeated it, however, hopefully. "Perhaps I would better go."

"Not unless you are afraid of me," he said gently.

"Afraid of you?" The swift glance into his face that the situation seemed naturally to demand against her will only served to turn her eyes away again in deeper distress. "You are joking, my dear Mr. Witter. Why should I be afraid of a good friend?"

He caught the meaning emphasis on the description, but went headlong on. "Suppose," he said, and his voice un-

naturally low, unnaturally near her, filled her with uneasiness, "suppose I were not a friend—solely?"

She looked down despairingly into the street.

"Suppose," said Arlan Ben Witter, "I love you as a man loves the one woman whom he needs always with him, near him, against his heart?"

"Please—please—" she said softly, miserably.

"I must say it—or rather, it is said," he answered almost sadly. "I am the man and you are the woman I want always with me, near me, and against my heart."

He moved away during her silence and at last came back and sat down on the couch so near her that he could take in his hand the soft tip of the feathery scarf she wore without suggesting too great an intimacy. "I knew when—before I began to tell you this, that you foresaw it and did not want the confession to be between us. But don't you see, in all perversity, the very knowledge of your attitude urged me on. A man cannot cherish a silent love in the way I have except for two reasons—one is an immortal hope invulnerable among the petty arrows of everyday denials, the other an unquenchable despair." He turned the feathery thing about in his long, smooth, pliant fingers. "Perhaps it would surprise you to know against what odds a man's hope will go on fighting. Perhaps it would move you to pity to see how life leaves it only with a brutal *coup de grâce*. So even though I see, and have seen, although I know and have known, that you do not love me, nothing except one thing can kill the hope within me, that spark that keeps the glow of life alight."

She sat quite silent. The flush in her cheeks had faded slowly, grimly, to a flat, dull white.

"Nothing except your own word that you love someone else can ever crush down in me the leaping, yearning madness of my blind belief that some day I can succeed in making you love me, in bringing your eyes around to mine in the veiled willingness of surrender

instead of in the troubled mist of compassion."

She had ceased to look in that agonizing impatience for her deliverance. No matter who came now it could not serve her. She turned and met his look squarely, without deliberation, but in the honest affection that was hers for all mankind.

"You try to convince me that you are not sorry for me," he said, half-smiling, "that you are sure I shall not suffer. Well, we shall see—I shall see!" He corrected himself. "Please don't think I am going to trouble you with my symptoms. I never could understand the point of view of the wooer who goes about his conquest by making himself a dreaded event, a disagreeable, threatening recurrence. Believe me in this. But woo you I shall in every way that imagination may devise, unless——"

He paused, twisting the fluffy scarf; then he dropped it suddenly, lifting his eyes to hers and straightening his shoulders as if to prepare for what weight of misery his fate might see fit to lay upon them. "Unless——" he said again, and with the repetition of the word his face went white as salt and he got to his feet. The length of the studio he walked and then came back to her. "Unless," he said so calmly that his voice seemed cold, "unless you love someone else."

She did not flush, nor flinch, nor turn her eyes away, but the gentleness he saw in them increased until it seemed to shed a tender pity upon his troubled look. "You must believe me when I tell you how greatly I am troubled that you should so love me. For you are right, you see—I do. I do love someone else."

His mouth did set more deeply into an enduring line, but it was the only change in him. He stood before her rigidly a moment, a moment of eternities, and then he dropped into his old place near her without a word. The discarded end of her scarf lay where he had left it—it seemed a year since. He drew it toward him blindly as he said half-aloud, "You do love someone else."

After a moment he looked up almost startingly. "I suppose I shall understand it by-and-bye," he said. "At present it is merely words, unmeaning words. You do love someone else—really?" His voice questioned her in the blank egoism of a child.

"Oh, really—very, very really," she answered, with a weariness that did not escape him, profoundly as he was immersed in his own new grief.

He studied her delicate face, which she had turned to the window as she answered him, and wondered if the quietude which seemed always to enshroud her personality was the result of an insistent sorrow. Perhaps because he suddenly felt he was looking at the real Cressida for the first time, and that with an intimate knowledge not at all conventional in the world's way, he rather forgot that it was not for him or for anyone to ask more.

"Does it make you unhappy?" he asked quietly.

She moved her head negatively. "No," she said.

"But you are unhappy," he insisted. "Unhappy—oh, yes—I suppose I am," she answered vaguely enough.

"I don't understand," said Arlan Ben Witter.

"Of course you don't—did anybody ever?"

"Is it that you are unhappy because of something else—not because you know what it is to love?"

"But you do understand!" she said.

He turned away a moment, looking at the studio door intently, almost inquiringly. "Is he—is he unworthy of your love?" he asked. They both had forgotten that the questions were too personal and the answers too intimate. But she quite smiled at this conjecture.

"Unworthy? He is the most wonderful man in all the world."

Arlan Ben Witter nursed his knee and regarded her briefly. "Good heavens, it can't be possible that he doesn't love you!" He brought it out as any lover would.

Her rather thin smile lived on under this stimulus. "Oh—he is very fond

of me. But you see he is married to someone who——"

He started from his place. "Married!" he cried sharply. "You!"

His tone of horrified amazement brought her look wonderingly to his face. "I," she repeated. He stared down at her, unbelief in his frozen eyes. Then, without lifting his look, he sat again beside her.

"Do you mean to tell me that you would permit yourself to be in love with a married man?" he said, every word a staccato note of incredulity.

She looked almost bewildered. "But how can I help it?" she asked. "I couldn't stop loving him just because he loved someone else and married her."

"He loves his wife?"

"Why, of course he does!" She suddenly flamed scarlet and drew away from him. "You didn't suppose—" The words stuck in her throat and she merely glared angrily. "Oh!" she said furiously, and rose to her feet.

The movement brought him to his senses. He sprang to her side as she moved toward the door. "Please—don't go. Do let me ask your forgiveness. How could I understand what you did mean?—you were so amazing and yet so vague. Cressida—my dear girl—I am on my knees in spirit. Believe me, I did not think anything harmful of you. You must have seen that all I could do was to try my best to believe what you told me. You in your innocence did not see the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from your confession. You would have said anything but what you did if you had not been the whitest soul in Christendom. Dear lady—please pity my distress. Be generous. You really did say—you know—such dreadful things."

She turned, forgiving him. "Did I?" she reflected. "Haven't we perhaps said a great many? Why should we be talking like this? After all, I owe you no explanation."

"No, no. It was impertinent—oh, more than that—of me to ask you so much. Somehow I forgot I had no right to ask anything. But—" he

hesitated, fearing to continue the intimate quality of their converse lest again he offend her by a reference to her confession—"I wish you would let me say just this: that you have made me very proud by giving me your confidence and that I shall cherish the thought of your belief in me. There are—there are a lot of things I would like to say, but I am afraid of paining you. But—but please regard me as a devoted friend who would find his greatest happiness in serving you. That sounds very conventional in the mouth of a—of a rejected suitor, but I mean it." His blond, still boyish head went up assertively.

She murmured a confused "Thank you." It was a trying situation in which to find oneself.

But Witter had softened to a less heroic pose. "My dear girl—it seems a strange fate for you!" he could not help saying. She stood before him in the embodiment of young beauty, seemingly the last person on earth marked out for a career of unrequited love. And how like her to see no way of evading her destiny! How exactly the product of her faithful, clean heart that she "could not stop loving him just because he loved someone else and married her!" Of course, she recognized no harm in her gentle, pure affection for this man—there wasn't any!

Her discomfort had not entirely disappeared, however, in spite of her readily forgiving him. She could understand vaguely that a man's attitude toward the situation would normally be different from her own, but she was ill at ease before its revelation.

"Really—I—don't you think Mrs. Wayne has given up all idea of coming?" she said, with an involuntary glance at the door. "It is quite half-an-hour after the time she set for me to meet here."

"Perhaps the rain——"

"Oh, it couldn't be that. At least I think not. It was raining when she went out from the apartment this morning—she was lunching out with friends."

Witter had no desire to prolong her

visit against her wish. "If you think Mrs. Wayne is not coming," he said, "let me see about getting you a cab. Or have you one waiting?"

"I have one waiting," she was saying, when there came a knock at the door.

In response to Witter's voice the door opened, and a man entered toward whom Cressida Predmore immediately turned. "Where is Mrs. Wayne? Has she sent me a message?" Her voice was anxious, but it was undeniably hostile.

The newcomer was a slightly built man of forty years, a little extreme in dress, with a foppish precision of attitude. He was slightly bald—a fact he did his best artistically to conceal, and there were ugly sacks beneath his disillusioned eyes. A faint scent of heliotrope diffused itself in the immediate vicinity of his violet-bordered handkerchief as he stood polishing lazily at his monocle, an affectation of which he was extremely proud. His hat, hanging on the finger of one yellow-gloved hand, positively glittered even in so dull a light.

"Mrs. Wayne is coming at once. She stopped at a little shop and sent me on to catch you." His voice, though he spoke English perfectly, had the unmistakable accent and inflection of a born Parisian.

"She is quite late," said Cressida. And then remembering her host, she added quickly: "I beg your pardon—I forgot you hadn't—Mr. Witter, this is Monsieur D'Erys—Mr. Witter."

"Oh, Mr. Witter and I are already acquainted, my dear Miss Predmore," said Monsieur D'Erys calmly, with a smile at his host.

"Why, indeed, yes. We—" Arlan Ben Witter's voice ceased suddenly. And then he tamely added, "We are already acquainted."

Cressida Predmore stood staring at D'Erys, as that dapper individual strolled toward the miniature, fixing his adoptive monocle into his eye. She had seen some sort of signal pass between the two men—a look resulting in Witter's hesitation and clumsily deflected speech. What did it mean?

The perfectly-fitting back of D'Erys's coat did not bid fair to enlighten her. She turned to look at Witter, but he had turned away.

"It is rather early for tea," he was saying, "but the day is so cheerless I am sure nobody need regard its hours as worthy of any consideration. Miss Predmore, would you do me the honor——?"

II

CRESSIDA PREDMORE drew off her gloves as she sat down in the embracing chair Witter drew forward for her to the table. She made a laughing, nervous comment on the popular fallacy of the meagerness and impracticability of masculine household arrangements—more from the desire to mask her knowledge of the look that had passed between the two men at Witter's acknowledgment of their acquaintance than from any thought there yet existed any such belief in these days of accelerated bachelorhood. The tea-table was indeed spread with a most complete assortment of all aids and ornaments to tea-making, and Cressida's infallible hands found pleasure in manipulating them.

It was while Arlan Ben Witter was gingerly lifting a pot of boiling water from a little gas-plate behind a Florentine screen, and Lucien D'Erys was leaning back in a long, creaking bamboo chair whose movable parts invariably refused to move, smoking a cigarette and regarding his accepted enemy with a genial calm, while she was pretending to be interested in a caddy of cloisonné, that Mrs. Wayne arrived.

Mrs. Wayne always arrived. She never came, or "turned up," or accomplished her appearance in any of the casual, unimportant ways good enough for the majority of mankind. There would be a sound of essentially feminine garments, a heralding stir of pleasurably perfumed air, a little pause, a little inarticulate syllable of sound and there she would be, graceful, charming, irradiating beauty. Her eyes were

brown, but not of a hard, stony brown—rather lazy and soft and good-natured, and tremendously appealing. Her nose was impertinent, and her mouth super-emotional, and her general effect was dangerous in the extreme.

"How late you are, Sidney!" said Cressida, putting down the cloisonné and watching the slow approach of the blistering kettle. "I had all but given you up when—Monsieur D'Erys arrived with your message that I was to be held until called for."

A flicker of amusement in that gentleman's eye told that he had not lost the almost imperceptible hesitation of contempt that preceded his name. Next to being loved by a woman, D'Erys liked to be hated. It was piquant, *va!*

Mrs. Wayne nodded and smiled at her host as she dropped into a chair. "Arlan Ben Witter, may his tribe increase!" she said merrily. "My dear Cress, don't scold—I sat too long over luncheon with that tiring beast of a man"—she flung D'Erys a glance—"and after that I really did have to do some little errands for which I had expected to have plenty of time. What on earth are you having tea so early for?"

"It was all we could think of," said Witter.

Cressida protested. "But I really want some, the day is so penetratingly depressing."

"Cress, you are cut out to be an old maid," said Mrs. Wayne lightly. She rose from her chair again and looked about. "Where's my portrait on ivory?" she demanded. "Is it completely and utterly finished?"

"I am afraid I can do no more," said Witter, indicating it where it hung. "I hope you like it—I should be so sorry if you were disappointed, for you have taken so much interest in its progress."

Sidney Wayne studied it at close range. "How on earth do your eyes stand the strain of this kind of thing!" she exclaimed. "I declare the very streaks in the iris of the eye are there—Cress, come, look."

Cressida came obediently to her side. "It is wonderful," she assented cordially. "And I think the likeness unusually successful—except——"

As she hesitated Arlan Ben Witter took up the sentence. "Miss Predmore has been criticizing the eyes just a little while ago; she finds that the lid of the left eye droops more markedly than the right—do you notice it? I really think it does a little."

"Sure enough," said Mrs. Wayne inelegantly, her charming head a bit to one side and the original left eye screwed up tightly. "It gives me quite a rakish appearance, eh—a sort of winking-at-the-camera effect!"

They were all three silent an instant.

"But," said the slow, peaceful voice of Lucien D'Erys from his secluded corner, his lazy length not stirring in the lounging-chair as he began to speak, "the lid of your left eye does droop more than the right, my dear Mrs. Wayne."

They all stared in a bit of amazement. Sidney Wayne glanced up in considerable embarrassment as both Cressida and Witter involuntarily turned toward her.

"It takes a Frenchman to know all one's imperfections!" she said, with what she thought was a laugh.

For some miserable reason Cressida Predmore turned her eyes away from that blushing face. But Arlan Ben Witter was too much engrossed in the question of his justification to notice her confusion.

"Really? No—was I just blindly truthful, Mrs. Wayne? Surely you don't mind—a miniature painter is like one's valet when it comes to knowing one's false eyebrows. Do look straight at me—let me see."

He fell back a step or two as she obeyed, still flushing, and his face twisted into the demoniac contortion which for some reason proves an aid to an artist's visual ability.

There was a brief stillness in the room. Then, "By Jove, you're right!" said Witter, apparently to D'Erys, though without addressing him personally.

Mrs. Wayne moved from his scru-

tiny. "And I am right and you are right and everything is quite correct," she quoted lightly. "Only do straighten me out—or can't you? I should hate to go down to posterity with eyes that were not mates. Can't you droop the other, too, or elevate this one?"

Unexpectedly D'Erys emerged from his inertia. "Not for the world—don't you touch it!" he said vigorously. "I like it just the way it is."

There was a pause, rather a dreadful pause. And all because Cressida was in the room. And of course it was Sidney Wayne who saved the situation.

"It's really awfully good of you," she said, turning to him with a smile, "but unfortunately for Witter, the miniature is being painted for me, not for you."

"Still," objected D'Erys, and though he answered her, his eyes were on the painter, "I beg you—as an appreciator of the real in art—not to have it changed."

The air seemed to clear itself of the strain that for a moment had surcharged it with thunder. Witter laughed and went back to the tea-table, to which, little by little, Cressida had retreated. And though Mrs. Wayne followed him speedily, Lucien D'Erys came back in his usual weary manner. He settled himself again in his bamboo chair, and moved impatiently with its creakings.

"You have there, Monsieur Witter, the portrait of a real woman—why try to make it conform with the ideal head done by machinery on a dinner plate?" he said with finality.

"What shall I do, Mrs. Wayne?" asked Witter half-laughing as he handed her a cup of tea.

She was impatient with him for pursuing the subject. "I am merely the guinea-pig under observation," she said, a shade crossly. "You are the scientist—give me any disease you please in the interest of mankind."

"Shall I leave it, then, as it is?"

Mrs. Wayne was actually cross with him. "I suppose so," she said rudely.

The rest of their visit was baldly

unpleasant, although D'Erys filled the air with amicable converse and peaceful cigarette smoke. Mrs. Wayne drank her tea as if it had been medicine and rose at the earliest possible moment.

"Come, Cressida," she said.

Cressida Predmore gathered her long, swinging gloves into her hands. She was more than glad to go. D'Erys she hated, and with Arlan Ben Witter she would never again be at her ease, and between herself and Sidney—well, she dreaded to think of just what lay between them. The cheerless day outside seemed much more livable than the warm, richly-colored corner of the studio where she sat with these companions. She stood silently by while Witter put the miniature into some protecting wrappings that Mrs. Wayne might safely carry it.

"Don't leave it around like this," he said as he put it into her hand. "A scratch upon it and the thing is done. It should be under glass."

She slipped it into her tiny muff. "Oh, I know," she said. "I have had a case made for it, from the measurement you gave me. It's home now. I will put the miniature into it at once. Good-bye, thank you so much. You'll come to see me, won't you? Sixteen rue Bayard, première. Good-bye, Monsieur D'Erys."

"But I may see you to your carriage?" said D'Erys placidly. He took his hat from the table, tossing down his gloves. "I'll be back, Ali Ben Witter," he said.

Cressida had said nothing. She bowed to her host and went out the first of any, leaving D'Erys to escort Mrs. Wayne. In the rain that pattered down outside ceremony was impossible. She slipped into the cab, leaving the door swinging wide. As she bent forward, drawing her skirts closer, she saw them in the doorway, exchanging those brief, low words that mark the making of an engagement. Sidney glanced down at the cab as she was speaking and saw the momentary glimpse of Cressida at the window.

In another moment she had scram-

bled into the cab. "How stupid a man is to keep one in the dampness, losing all the *ondulation* of one's coiffure while he asks one to go to dinner!"

Cressida did not answer. She engaged herself in shaking out the light robe and letting it fall over their knees. Sidney Wayne took hold of it at the edge and arranged it closely about her. "When I say he asks one I am merely trying to be grammatical, not truthful. As a matter of fact, he naturally invited two. Would you like to go to dinner with us tonight?"

The girl looked out of her window somewhat grimly. "Thank you," she said. "I had planned to dine at home."

Not another word was said between them during that short but interminable ride. Mrs. Wayne sat back, looking interestedly out of the window. Cressida sat straightly, staring sightlessly at the spattered pane.

Her thoughts were flying to and fro, like a shuttle weaving the threads of the present into the warp of the past. She was not quite twenty-four, was Cressida, and yet there seemed an infinite amount of material spun for the weaving. She saw herself again as a little girl in short pink skirts, awkward and abashed in her aunt's home. Sidney, her little hostess, was four years her senior, an imperious, beautiful child, who had never suffered that terrible period of lanky limbs and a stringy neck. Sidney had always been round and graceful and—somehow, finished off. Her Summer gowns were cut to show the dimples in her brown elbows and the soft, sweet, boneless curve of her throat. Her dark hair, boxed straightly about her pretty, roguish face, had never suffered from curling papers and braidings. But little Cressida with her long, dangling red plaits had undergone every torment in the efforts her nurse put forth to soften this uncompromising frame about her plain face. Her hair had been puffed and curled and beribboned—she knew bitterly to how little avail. Her arms were long and thin, and so were her legs, and she seemed ever at a

loss beneath the responsibility of caring for her hands and feet. All this had been aggravated by her growing to an appalling height, suddenly, almost overnight, as it were, and of being unable, even by stooping, to remain in her own class of girls. That had been an unhappy time for Cressida, spending every Summer as she did with Sidney at the seashore. For above and beyond Sidney's physical beauty she had had little to recommend her. Cressida even then excused it when she saw how badly Sidney's mother was bringing her up—for children realize things in a way many grown-ups would discredit. She saw Sidney disobedient, petulant, untruthful, unkind, but always clever, and she saw that the weak nature of the mother preferred to be imposed upon than through recognition of her daughter's faults to be forced energetically and systematically to correct them.

Sidney had been ungente and unjust to her so often in those vacations that it had become, in the vista of memory, one endless martyrdom, and though she invariably tried to atone for her meannesses or her cruelties in her extravagant way, the young Cressida had always been too certain of the meretricious value of this restitution to take comfort in it.

The nature of the girl was extravagant in all things, unbalanced, over-emotional and theatric. She had been a hysterical burden to her teachers, a mysterious, super-imaginative adolescent full of somber miseries and unspoken woes, a tendency which had developed in maturity into a craving for excitement and dramatic crises.

There had come a Summer when Cressida had been spared what her father blindly supposed to be her great delight. She was a silent sort of creature, rather unfathomable in her repression and self-containment. Her acquiescence in his yearly plans for her accompanying her aunt and cousin to the seashore had stood sponsor to his idea that she enjoyed being with them. And indeed he was not to be blamed for this, for she had done so these ten

Summers and custom had strengthened his belief. So it was ironically enough in somewhat of a hesitant mood that he approached her with the news that he had rather planned to spend the Summer months in the mountains of Switzerland, and would be glad if she would go with him, though he had no wish to coerce her or to make her feel that she must go. He noticed that her eyes shone bravely as she replied without consideration, "Of course I want to go with you," but even then he wondered if the brightness of her look were resultant from the refraction of tears.

She had gone with him and with her heart liting, though her face was as sweetly grave as ever. She had grown now into a woman, though her father had no idea of that, one may be sure, and had lost the scrawny awkwardness of her teens. She was then twenty, tall, slender, but supple with a natural grace and health. Her heavy coppery hair refused asever to exhibit the slightest wave or curl, but it stood so massively thick about her face and was so lacking in disfiguring, short-hanging locks that it made a most perfect setting for her charming face. She was not pretty like her cousin Sidney; her nose had no piquant tilt, her mouth no saucy, coquettish curves and dimples. Her eyes were uncompromisingly gray and straightforward. But there was that about her face that the painters of ideal womanhood had sought to portray upon their canvases, something that caught one's eye like a bright light and made her departure a thing to be regretted.

It was on this trip with her silent, self-immersed father that she had met Gregory Wayne. He had come to her rescue in a railway station when the prearranged connections in her father's plans for himself and for her had failed signally, and left her stranded and miserable and ignorant. Wayne had watched her eyes perplexedly wandering about for a full three minutes before he summoned up sufficient courage to address her. She had turned to him the face of a bewildered child and he had

taken her under his protection for the day. There was no other train by which her father could return to her, he ascertained, before night, and so they had spent the afternoon together, taking a long drive into the country just outside the town—for which she gravely insisted upon paying her share—and dining together in an adorable little inn where again she divided the footing of the bill by two. He had been thoroughly charmed with her, and utterly delighted when, on their going to meet her father at the evening train, he had graciously appreciated the service Wayne had rendered his daughter, and encouraged the young man's evident willingness to turn up now and then on their path along the route.

So had Gregory Wayne come into her life, and so in her own sweet innocent way she had given her devotion to him. There was no little incident, no trivial occurrence in all their journeyings together that had not shown him to advantage, nothing she could remember but that emphasized his thorough manliness and worth. It had never occurred to her, any more than it had to her absent-minded, academic father, to think of a reciprocal attachment of a serious nature. She simply admired because he proved admirable, trusted because he was trustworthy, and loved because he was lovable.

When the Winter saw them all again in Manhattan and pretty Sidney Fairley had turned the magnetic power of her attractive personality upon her cousin's friend with fatal effect, there was no feeling of resentment in Cressida's poor heart. Jealousy there was, yes, and a bitter emptiness for which she found no name; but no disappointment, no envious wickedness. For Cressida had never hoped he would see anything in her to love—was she not the ugly duckling of the family? But she did know how unworthy Sidney was to be trusted with the dear burden of this brave man's heart, and she looked fearfully into the future for his sake.

It was quite true, what she had said to Witter. She had not been able to

stop loving him just because he loved someone else. It would have seemed a very poor reason to her, had she ever thought of reasons, or considered it for a moment in any light. It would be a strange kind of love that could pluck itself up by the roots just because it was fated to grow where it would never be seen. It would be a self-seeking sort of love that would kill itself because it could not have and hold the heart dearest to it in all the world.

Young, sane, essentially pure-minded as she was, she knew nothing of a world's evil interpretation of the passion. Love to her meant desiring all happiness for him, unthinking of her own, the undivided wish that his wishes might be granted him at the expense of her own life, if need be. Because she was a good woman she loved him with a large tenderness, as a mother loves her boy.

She had seen little of them after they were married, because her father had been tendered a degree by Oxford and after receiving it had lingered in England, among the many new relationships and interests that sprang from his new honors, keeping his daughter by his side. She had had frequent letters from Sidney, filled with characteristically selfish information, little more, in fact, than a transcript of her engagement-pad. She saw when Gregory Wayne's affairs—he had become quite famous among the younger engineers of the country—took him away from Manhattan, that Sidney did not accompany him, remaining to fulfil her engagements, entertain her friends and continue the purposeless battle against boredom. She noted also that Gregory Wayne's absences became more frequent, more extended, so that she was not in any way surprised when Sidney's letter had come informing her of her intention to spend a year in Paris while her husband was engaged in that "tiresome irrigation in the West." The plan had developed, owing to Professor Predmore's unexpected determination to attend a congress in Berlin, where Cressida would have been

more or less in the way, and after that to travel for some months in Russia and Siberia, where conditions made it undesirable that his daughter should accompany him that Cressida should stay under Sidney's chaperonage in Paris.

And so it was that she found herself in the unendurable position she now filled of being the actual chaperon of the party with no authority and no redress.

Sidney had many friends who were uncongenial to Cressida—in fact, she had none of whom the girl could really approve, save, perhaps, the harmless little Arlan Ben Witter, who was himself more in the way of being a milliner than a friend. But of all the worthless lot of them Lucien D'Erys was the one who caused her uneasy anger and resentment. Had she not been so unused to symptoms of dangerous flirtations, had she been any older or more worldly-wise, the chances are she would have taken matters in her own hands, regardless of the older woman's fury, and written Gregory that she was afraid Sidney was being annoyed by the persistent attentions of a French gentleman of leisure and that she was sure the presence of an American husband for a few days or so would clear their horizon of an objectionable presence and make his wife's stay in Paris much more enjoyable. But Cressida was very young, much younger in experience than in years, and she was as unworldly as her own ignorance and her perfect baby of a father could have made her had he started out with the deliberate intention of keeping her as innocent of worldly guile as she had been on the day her poor little mother died in giving her the breath of life.

Had she not been just the unsophisticated little fool her life among her father's dry books and impersonal theories had made her she would have seen that there was that going on under her very eyes which would have burned the heart out of her body in one blush. As it was, she—even she—was uneasy and distressed, but only

for what she deemed to be Sidney's wilful disregard of appearances.

Her natural superabundant reserve made it dreadful to her so much as to contemplate a protest against the continuing of such folly. But when it came actually to broaching the subject the first word stuck in her throat like Macbeth's amen.

She stole a glance at her cousin's face as Sidney somewhat sulkily descended from the cab before their door. She noted the weak, sensual, emotional mouth, the sweet, dreamy, superimaginative eyes and the vain, flirtatious little nose. If there was anything in analogy between face and soul, here indeed was a dangerous security on which Gregory Wayne banked his heart, his life.

She followed her slowly into the house and into their rooms. She even went into Sidney's bedroom and stood in the window drawing off her gloves, tortured with a feeling that in her silence she was proving faithless to Gregory Wayne's friendship for her. What would she not have given just then for the courage—no, the ability—to turn about and voice the anxieties that tore her heart! But somehow the words would not come, and when Mrs. Wayne, with a graceful yawn and a lithe elongation of her luxurious little person, declared that the day was miles long and that she should lie down and try to sleep through the hour that yet was to be lived before it was time to think of dressing for dinner, Cressida went away at her bidding and with a feeling in her heart that Gregory would bitterly reproach her could he know the truth.

III

AN hour later, however, when the *concierge* of the house came up to the door of their little salon, to put a letter addressed in Gregory Wayne's well-known handwriting into Cressida's hand "*pour madame*," it seemed to the girl that he had been the bearer of her long-sought courage. But because he

delayed to ask her for orders concerning dinner she hardly realized her own intention when she found herself on the very threshold of Mrs. Wayne's bedroom. There she paused irresolutely, not because her unbelievable determination had deserted her, but because Sidney was lying with her eyes closed, and her long experience, dating from mere babyhood in the house of her semi-invalid father, whose sleep was rare and precious, had bred in her a feeling that to break another's rest was little short of criminal. Sidney, however, solved the difficulty by opening her eyes.

"Come in," she said. "I'm only playing 'possum.'"

"It's a letter," said Cressida, entering.

Mrs. Wayne sat up among her pillows, half-eagerly holding out a hand for it. In her dainty way, her emotions were ever graceful.

Cressida's eyes held hers steadily as she gave her the letter. "It's from Gregory," she said, and watched the interest in Mrs. Wayne's face flicker and die.

Sidney took the envelope. "Oh—Gregory," she echoed, with an involuntary inflection of indifference, as she drooped back into her pillows. Cressida stood a moment, looking at the thick letter lying unconsidered in her cousin's hand; then with considerable abruptness she turned and walked to the window.

The rain was clearing away in drifting clouds to give all Paris a glimpse of an unforgettable sunset. The white and gray of the stout building opposite were cut out sharply against a sky so pink that it seemed to have an odor like a rose. As far as the eye could see and then as far again the endless current of carriages and pedestrians made kaleidoscopic the street below her. Ever afterward in her life the look of a long street blackened with that human moving stream brought a little catch into her throat in memory of that day.

She was for a moment a little frightened, even in the face of her new courage, by what she had determined to

do. While she stood so she heard Mrs. Wayne sit up on the edge of the bed and yawn and then cross the room to her dressing-table, her long silk gown moving delicately in gentle sounds.

When Cressida turned about to face the room again Sidney Wayne was sitting before her mirror and in her hands she was holding the miniature whereon, in her most adorable aspect, she was daintily portrayed.

"Sidney," said Cressida, her voice sounding like that of a stranger even to herself, and her body trembling with her temerity, "why did you have that miniature painted?"

"Is it such an extraordinary thing to have done?" inquired Mrs. Wayne indolently, as she laid it down and picked up a comb to smooth her hair.

"You mean by that, of course, that it is none of my business and that you would rather I should not pursue the subject."

Sidney was silent while she ran the comb through the ripples at the back of her head, and took up a hand-glass to survey the result. "You are, as usual, very observant," she said at last, quite gently.

"I can't stop now, Sidney, just because you make it hard for me to go on," said Cressida, her voice coming with difficulty through her constricted throat. "I have wanted to say this before, but I have never had the courage. Now that I have begun, you cannot stop me in that way. It is my business. It is my business if I see that you are blindly compromising yourself with a worthless man like Monsieur D'Erys, to tell you so, and to tell you that everybody sees it except yourself."

Sidney's color rose angrily. "You talk like a silly schoolmarm. Don't be silly. Monsieur D'Erys is a good friend."

"He is not a friend."

"Of yours—perhaps not!" Mrs. Wayne shrugged her loosely clad shoulders. "You have been systematically rude to him."

"Neither is he your friend," persisted Cressida.

"Ah, *fichtre!*"

"When a man does not scruple to compromise a woman, Sidney, he is not a friend, though he may be her lover."

"Don't be rude, my dear."

Cressida's eyes did not waver under the warning tone of this equable advice. "He is in love with you," she said quietly.

It pleased the woman even while she irritably denied it. "Nonsense! I am a pleasant *vis-à-vis* at dinner, that is all."

In the little silence that followed, if Mrs. Wayne chose to assume that the discussion had been satisfactorily ended, there was perfected her disillusionment.

"I am a little younger than you, Sidney, and unmarried, but I am not a little girl to be told to run away and not bother. I promised Gregory to take good care of you—of course I can't do that, but I can protest against another's abuse of your cordiality. Monsieur D'Erys is doing that. He lets it be seen that you are more than gracious to him. He takes you to dine at places where you are seen by people who put their own construction upon your preference for his society. He drives with you, he takes you to the play. Not a day passes that you are not seen together—conspicuously alone together."

"How often does he ask you to go with us?" inquired Sidney Wayne in a level voice of temporary forbearance.

"Always," said Cressida. "He knows I will refuse. Perhaps," she turned aside a little, "perhaps I should have gone for your sake. Perhaps I have been gravely at fault. But the only feeling I had was that it would be impossible to accept anything at his hands and keep any shred of self-respect." She turned in another impulse of bravery to Mrs. Wayne. "Sidney," she said, with a tenderness in her voice that was the curious result of her love for this woman's husband,

"please hear me! You may be unaware of it—of course you are—but people are talking about you. And whether it is true or whether it is a lie that this man's homage is not distasteful to you, its continual intrusion is an insult to Gregory, and your tolerance of it a most cruel reward for all his devotion to you." Her color faintly deepened and her voice shook a little with the words. "I don't believe you think of him twice a day. You hardly bother to write to him. And yet all he is doing every moment of his existence he is doing and living for you! There he is out in that heaven-forgotten prairie, with the eyes of all the world watching the wonderful work he is planning and accomplishing, and yet all that the success and fame mean to him is the achievement of something more to lay at your feet. Oh, Sidney—to leave for nothing all his sum of good! To prefer to soil his name in the dust of a petty gossips' tale, or even to risk it in the mud of a scandal, for the amusement of a man not worthy to lace his shoes! Look at the two of them—Lucien D'Erys, an inventor of extreme fashions, a slayer of women's hearts, artificial, idle, worthless and insincere. And look at Gregory—don't you see what he is? Can't you appreciate the work that he is doing, clearing away the obstructions that have for centuries stood in the way of his country's progress? Can't you understand the greatness of the man without his exploitation in a society newspaper? Can't you make an effort to be equal to him? Can't you let this silly flirtation alone and give every grace and virtue you can rake and scrape together to Gregory Wayne? It won't be half enough, not half!"

Sidney had listened without one glance into the impassioned face of the girl near her. But now as the ringing, pleading voice fell silent she did look up.

"Have you quite finished, my dear? You see I did not interrupt or put you off. I wanted you to have your say, and all of it. You may be eloquent,

Cress, but you are not wise. Moreover—and I sincerely don't want to be disagreeable—don't you think you are just a little bit over-zealous? Isn't this sort of thing rather a matter for Gregory and me to discuss, if discussed it must be? That is one of the things one learns as one grows older—one can't learn it too soon. You are making a mountain out of a mole-hill, and it isn't even your own mole-hill! People are not, however, let me reassure you, 'talking about me.' People in the more cosmopolitan circles have not quite the same ideas as those which your blessed ignoramus of a father has instilled into your little country head. People are a bit broader-minded in a place of this kind, my dear, and, I must say, I think more rational. Why should not a man and woman enjoy a charming friendship, as well as two men, say, or two women? Isn't it a bit low to see nothing but the possible liaison?"

Cressida became suddenly scarlet, but Mrs. Wayne had again diverted her attention to the completion of her toilet and did not notice.

"You have seen fit to show me pointedly a number of times that with all the depth of your worldly inexperience you disapproved of my friendship for Lucien D'Erys, and I have been good-natured about it because I am very fond of you. But the habit of finding fault, my dear, has gone out of fashion, and the cultivation of it will condemn you to a lonely old age."

So lightly was she treating the matter that during the latter part of her long speech she was occupied, it would seem, far more with the rummaging of her hands in her bureau drawer than with the reproof she administered to Cressida. And it may be that had her long, sweet fingers not encountered what she sought among the tumbled veils and mouchoirs and laces she might have said even more. But when she did find it she lost what slight interest the girl's temerity had awakened in her point of view. From the confusion of the drawer Mrs. Wayne drew

out a large, plain, flat gold locket and turned it over in her palm.

Then to Cressida's surprise she thrust it back among the veils and laces. A perceptible pink crept into her forehead as she leaned negligently forward and daintily powdered her nose. "The miniature will look prettier in the case," she observed.

"Why don't you put it in, then?" inquired Cressida, puzzled by the woman's action, though still too deeply engrossed in her miserable thoughts to give it any serious consideration.

"I am going to," said Mrs. Wayne placidly.

She put her hand beneath the pile of soft things again and without the slightest embarrassment produced the gold case she had so suddenly thrust out of sight. Cressida watched her inattentively as she slipped the delicate film of ivory home into the locket, and then she turned again toward the window.

The girl's face was no longer determined, no longer impassioned. Sidney had intrenched herself impregnably behind the reserve of social convention, that most impassable barrier of all to present to a woman of gentle breeding. With a deepening sense of her failure, Cressida stood looking out at the dusk rapidly growing darker with the celerity of shortening days. But her eyes did not see the glimmering façades opposite. Through a mist somewhat like that of tears she saw the mirage of a flat and arid waste where the man who was laboring to lead into its sands the water that should make of it an Eden was bending over hungrily in the light of a battered, rusty lantern to refresh his eyes with a sight of a loved face, painted exquisitely on ivory and cased in plain dull gold. The sound of the locket closing as Mrs. Wayne snapped its edges together dispelled the vision. Well enough did Cressida know that this was not its errand.

It was odd that Cressida, with her slight knowledge of life, which was quite as inconsiderable as Sidney Wayne made it out to be, should have been able to read and understand her

cousin's character so thoroughly, for although she had had ample time to learn its varying parts since the first day they had played house together until the present days of keeping house together, she was herself of the invariable directness and certainty that frequently persists in merely condemning the more hysterical and emotional nature, without troubling to understand it in the least.

To Cressida, however, Sidney's present attitude was distinctly revealed. She knew that nothing ever lasted very long in the woman's usage, but that while it engrossed her it dwarfed all other things into insignificance. And so while the girl did not suspect Sidney Wayne of any irreparable unfaithfulness to her husband, she knew the tremendous importance that the devotion of D'Erys had taken on in the woman's eyes, and that the woman herself understood herself so little as to believe implicitly in this sham value.

It did not surprise her in the least when suddenly Mrs. Wayne flung an arm about her shoulder and, drawing her slightly backward, kissed her in friendly fashion on the cheek. She yielded to the caress gently.

"Come, don't be cross with me," said Sidney brightly. "I can't bear to have people cross with me. You are such a dear old goose, Cress. Come, do smile and tell me how you like this gown. I shall have to get you to hook it here on the shoulder for me if you don't mind. Oh, when shall I be rich enough to have a real maid, Cress?"

"I should say the very first moment Gregory can let you have her," replied Cressida, intent upon the fastenings. "There's nothing in the world he can give you that he does not want you to have at once."

Mrs. Wayne sighed fretfully. "But a maid would be really so slight an expense. It seems to me if the chances are so largely in favor of his making millions if this scheme proves feasible—this irrigation scheme—now there's another hook here at the side of the neck, Cress—yes, there."

"Gregory is too wise to discount the possible future, Sidney."

"Oh, wisel" said Mrs. Wayne, with soft impatience. "There, Cress, am I all right now?" She shook out her filmy black skirts daintily in front of the long mirror. It reminded Cressida of the days when they went together to a dancing class, and she used to watch Sidney plume her fluffy skirts and twitch her crisp ribbons in dejected silence. "You are very charming," she answered sincerely. "I think I have never seen you look any better."

Mrs. Wayne characteristically took this unaffected compliment to mean that a truce had taken effect between them banishing all discord or topics thereof. She spun around lightly and kissed the girl again. "Take that for being a sweet dear and saying such pretty things." Indeed, the woman had revived under the light praise as a flower put into water. She visibly wilted in the atmosphere of disapproval.

Cressida mechanically took a step nearer the dresser and began inattentively to straighten its confusion. She noticed that the gold case containing the miniature had disappeared and her doubts and fears flamed once more suddenly into an articulate heat.

"Sidney!" she said, turning on the woman, who was drawing on her long gloves with a pretty air of distressed concentration, "you must not!"

Mrs. Wayne lifted her face with a chilling interrogation. "Now, Cressida Predmore," she said, with a touch of her old-time childish resentment, "don't you begin again. I am going to dinner with anyone I choose, and without your entirely unnecessary approval."

"That is not what I mean," said Cressida quickly. Unworldly as she was, she knew, quite apart from the ethical unrighteousness of the thing, that to put into the hands of a man like D'Erys an intimate portrait with all the romantic suggestion of a miniature was to court comment in club and château.

"Well, then, what do you mean?" snapped Mrs. Wayne sharply.

But before Cressida had time to answer there came a knock at the door of their little salon and almost immediately after the voice of the good *concierge*, whose head one could imagine entering in a narrow margin of space, inquired: "*Dame est chez elle? Voilà monsieur en bas qui'l attend.*"

Mrs. Wayne went out slowly in the direction of the voice. "I will be down at once," she said in French. "Good-bye, Cressida—sorry you aren't coming with us."

"Sidney—Sidney—please wait a moment. I must speak to you."

But Mrs. Wayne held herself secure in the presence of Antoine, who lingered.

"My dear child, I can't stop now and keep Monsieur D'Erys waiting at the steps like a footman. Tell me when I come back." She went past the lingering Antoine and disappeared from sight.

The *concierge* coughed gently as Cressida turned away from the door with a helpless despair. "*C'est que ma'm'selle—*"

Cressida turned back to him. "What is it, Antoine?"

She noticed for the first time the man's evident distress. There were upright furrows between his brows and a drawn rigidity about his mouth, and upon his usually placid face black care had settled heavily. He swallowed hard once or twice before replying, and Cressida came quite to the door again and looked at him in some concern. "What is it, Antoine?" she said again.

Ludicrously from the man's tragic mouth came the question, "If ma'm'selle could arrange herself with some *p'tite mamie* and bread and cheese and coffee?"

Cressida somewhat stared. "I don't quite understand," she said wonderingly.

Two large tears forced themselves cruelly to the surface of Antoine's eyes. "It is that—it is that my little child is sick to die, and his mother as

far as to kill herself, and I have no one to send for the dinner of ma'm'selle. But the potage and bread and cheese and coffee I have in the house, and if ma'm'selle would be so good—" A badly stifled sob cut short the unnecessary appeal.

Cressida's hand had gone out with a quick sympathy to lie on the good man's arm. "But do not consider me in the least!" she cried warmly. "Do not bring me anything. I am not in the least hungry. What is the matter with the poor little soul?"

"Ah, the good God knows, ma'm'selle. He cries out of the pain in his head. M'sieur the doctor has been here and comes again later. There is much fever and the accursed pain."

"Perhaps there is something I could do for you?" she asked, her own brows drawn into somewhat similar lines to his own. "Is there not something?"

Antoine shook his head sadly. "But there is nothing to be done, ma'm'selle. I would well that there was, for it is terrible to sit all the while with nothing to do but listen and pray and weep."

Cressida patted his arm encouragingly. "Well, you will let me know later if I can do anything for you, won't you, Antoine? If you want medicine or anything—I will very gladly go for anything you need. Or if I can do anything for Célestine, just call me. You need not come up. I will leave the door open and then can hear your voice if you want me."

Antoine took the delicate hand in his own fat, honest fingers and kissed it. One of his large tears fell upon its satin surface, and he gravely dried it with his large pocket handkerchief.

"That God may bless you, ma'm'selle," he sobbed, and, turning, went heavily down the stairs.

Cressida turned back with something akin in feeling, to face the next few hours of supperless solitude. She

was, for all her attributed severity, only a young girl, with a "natural fluttering up to joy." The little salon, with its bedroom on either side emptier than itself, looked sadly and dejectedly vacant. It was a pretty room, for their three months' occupancy had gradually softened its original defects and slowly added bit by bit the homelike suggestion it undoubtedly had achieved. Yet Cressida stood in the midst of it, and looked at it with hostile eyes. What would she not give to be away from it, and all that it had made possible, away with her dear, simple-souled, clean-hearted father? She felt suddenly soiled by the contact of all this petty wrong-doing. Her clear appreciation of it made her seem, for the moment in her own distorted estimate of herself, part of that unworthy situation.

She wandered aimlessly into her own room, and drew a chair near her dressing-table. Sitting down she leaned both elbows on the table and her chin in her hands and gazed at herself. It was an old habit that her motherlessness had originated. Face to face with a pair of eyes that looked so steadfastly into her own, a pair of eyes her father had often told her had seemed to close in her mother's lids only to open again in her first baby look at a strange world, she seemed more capable of taking herself honestly to task.

"Have you done what was right in this matter?" asked the eyes in the mirror.

"I don't know, upon my soul," said Cressida.

Where she blamed herself the most was for not having gone about with Sidney more rigorously. And yet in her own self-defense she brought it forward that it was rather impossible for her to dog her cousin's footsteps when not invited to do so.

"But," said the eyes in the mirror, "you were asked to go—for example, tonight."

"Ah, yes," confessed Cressida humbly, "tonight."

Why was it that tonight seemed a

crucial occasion? Because she had for the first time found the courage articulately to remonstrate with Sidney? Partly that, and partly because of the miniature. She felt certain Sidney had taken it with her, but hope battled against the suggestion that she intended to present it to D'Erys. Perhaps her childish vanity found pleasure in exhibiting it to him in its new setting, to tempt him into wishing he might possess it and to tease him with denials. But Cressida turned from the picture with an open shudder. It was so little better than the actual false step she had attempted to avert.

"You think, then, I should have gone about with them whenever an invitation to do so offered a decent excuse?" asked Cressida.

"I do," said the eyes in the mirror.

Cressida sighed. "Perhaps you are right, but I don't see that it would really have done much good. Whenever I was not wanted I could be omitted from the invitation. The only reason I have been so frequently included is that Monsieur D'Erys could count on me to say no."

She moved a little uneasily in her chair as she somewhat weakly defended herself. "If only I were older than Sidney, or had someone to advise me, I might have acted more wisely, more effectually."

"There is your father," said the eyes in the mirror. Cressida nodded thoughtfully. "Well, you know I thought of that. But after all, wouldn't he be rather intolerant? He is himself so beyond any conceivable touch of disgraceful weakness that he merely ignores it in others. If it indubitably makes itself apparent, then he omits the people themselves."

Nevertheless she considered it again. Should she have written her father? Young though she was, she had experienced the difficulty that arises in making matters sound at a great distance and through a coldly black and white medium as they were meant to do, or as they would have sounded if communicated in a more human way at short range. Could she have made

him realize the extreme danger of the situation without leading him to exaggerate it?—in which latter event he would merely have precipitated a family war by swooping down from the Steppes of Russia and snatching her from her undesirable surroundings. And that, she concluded, would merely have aimed a stone at Sidney and have struck Gregory in the heart.

The eyes in the mirror had to admit there was that grave possibility. Cressida on that withdrew her look and stared down at her pincushion with an apparent interest that was wholly fictitious. There was what might be termed a pause in the proceedings.

Then very slowly her eyes were drawn again to the steady eyes in the mirror. "You might have written to Gregory," was the accusation that she faced.

Cressida pressed her lips closely together. Delicate ground indeed to venture upon, that inconsiderable borderland between husband and wife. Yet she knew she could have done it—for Gregory was fond of her, and would understand how wholly for his sake and Sidney's she would have told him of this undesirable presence, this man who rather made a fad of pursuing charming women in his own dilettante fashion. But here again arose the same question—how to convey to a masculine intelligence the need for peremptory interposition without suggesting vastly more—what was not true, and never could be.

She blushed suddenly a hurtful, slow scarlet as she realized that to her own eyes, to the mirror reflection of her own eyes, she had repeated insistently, "What is not true and never could be." Repeated it as if her other eyes had sadly questioned her contention.

Her face slipped into her hands and without warning the nervous tears burst from her overlaid heart. "What am I thinking! What am I thinking!" she sobbed, horrified. "It isn't true, upon my soul, Gregory, dear Gregory. I never doubted her one moment—on my honor!"

Still sobbing in the sudden revulsion from her over-strained calm, she got to her feet, moving about the room aimlessly. With her soft hands clenched and pressed against her mouth, her clear, gray eyes still wild with tears, she wandered from her own room, as if in so doing she could shake from her all recollection of that terrible moment that had come to her within its walls. She crossed the little salon and went in at Sidney's open door, still blindly.

But the atmosphere of the woman's room struck her like a blow. She stretched out her hands in the empty air, the tears streaming down her wretched face again. "Sidney, believe me, believe me—not for a moment really, not for a moment, dear!"

Totally unnerved by the hysteria of her grave distress, she sank down in a little heap beside the bed, her arms still outstretched upon the coverlet, and there she huddled, sobbing, hiding her face and protesting over and over her innocence.

But as her hands moved hither and yon upon the counterpane, as if she were groping for help, they touched something alien. She felt its cool, smooth surface blindly and then drew it toward her, lifting her head. It was the letter from Gregory, unopened.

There was something indubitably pathetic in this silent evidence of love unwelcomed. And yet it brought her, oddly enough, a sense of relief. Unconsidered, unthought of, he might be, yet Gregory was there. Undeniably, there was Gregory to depend upon. And if ever Sidney needed help, who would be first to give it, if not Gregory?

She drew the letter even nearer. How the mere touch of it encouraged her! No human being, and surely not God, expected of her impossible things. She had been torturing herself with her dread responsibility until she bade fair to unfit herself for any usefulness whatever. There was something in the very look of the small, square writing that seemed to bring

her a soothing, calming message of quiet strength at call.

Then should she ask for it? Should she send some gentle lie across the water to him, saying she thought Sidney seemed lonely, and could he not come over, if only for a month with them? It would take him at least the eleven days to get to Paris—should she send for him to come?

And then something on the white square danced before her eyes. She leaned over it incredulously, brushing the tears from her lashes. She hung over it frozen, and her breath came in one great gasp. The letter had been posted in London.

IV

IN the parc du Café Pompadour the mellow darkness was illumined by row upon row of the tricolored lights so dear to Paris. Like chains of bizarre jewels they swung from one tree to another, completely circling the cleverly artificial pond that Monsieur Pierre had known would prove so vastly more agreeable to his beloved boulevardiers than the natural raggedness in which he had found it. Everywhere there were tables, here by the side of the lake nearest the café comfortable, square ones with white napery, over there by the farther side from the cuisine small, round ones of metal for *buveurs*. A band of musicians played along with much verve in a little pavilion far enough away that the sound should interfere not a whit with the most intimate of conversations, and near enough to lend the added color of tzigane dress to the general effect.

There was one table in the place, for which Pierre smilingly said he had ten—twenty applications in an evening—which was a lie. But frequently indeed his patrons did engage it in advance, for it was quite unique and isolated, standing at the very edge of the basin between an urn and a flower-bed, and cut off by a neat, broad

path from the rest of the garden. It was here that Sidney Wayne and D'Erys had elected to dine, and it was here they sat over their coffee and liqueurs, drawn together in the veil of smoke from his cigarette.

The evening was cool, though a mellowness tempered the air to her thin gown, and she was happy enough to have forgotten that it rained all day and that the ground was cold and damp under her delicate shoes.

D'Erys was happy, too, filled with the dreams of the exalted hour and his favorite champagne. And they both looked into what they considered the future and smiled.

"Oh, the dear happiness of this!" sighed D'Erys. "The hour, the place and the woman!"

She laughed at him with a glance. "The woman last," she said.

"The last woman," said D'Erys.

He puffed a moment as he considered it. "You are no silly girl," he said; "to prefer to be first. What folly it is! Who would insist upon being a doctor's first patient, a lawyer's first client! What more does a beginner know of the gentle art of being a lover? Oh, it is gentle and it is an art! Think of the complexity of a woman's nature, the labyrinthine track that leads to her heart. Why should a man who has never been in the forest expect to be given the reward of a woodsman? Why should a man deem his right to a woman's heart depends solely on his wanting it? Does he expect to stop a banker on the Bourse and say, 'I love your money. Give it to me'? Yet the same man, with no qualifications for making a woman happy, with no knowledge of the art of being a lover, expects that a woman will give him her love and life for the asking." He looked at her with nearly closed lids as he leaned toward her through the sweet-smelling smoke. The self-effacing waiter silently refilled the tiny glasses from the golden jar of madness. She was very lovely in the soft light, flushed as she was and with her nerves sparkling under the stimulus of the wine.

"I have loved many women," said D'Erys blandly, "and most men have. But I swear to you before the just God that I love you more than the rest put together. You are everything that is lovable—why should I not love you? You are beautiful with a beauty that no man could describe even if he hated you. You are spirituelle, you have an allure that—ah, my dear, I am not the first to feel it! You are sweet, and with all your coquetry and your practiced fascination—you are gentle and good, and thricefold desirable. You fill my mind, you fill my heart, you fill my days."

She lifted her eyes to his contentedly. He stretched forth his hand inconspicuously and laid it over hers. "Love, my little Sidney, is a brave thing! How it does fill the air with bliss and deep content! Fancy if I were here tonight with someone else—how stupid it would all have been! The crude lights, the bad music, the chill evening, the very good and therefore wasted dinner! But with you—" He broke off, smiling whimsically at the picture that drew itself into distinctness in the drift of smoke before him. "I am sure, when I am old, my little Sidney, and when you are old, too, poor child——"

"I shall never be old," said she, with the prodigality of one having many young years still to live.

"I am sure I shall sit with my cold old bones in the sunlight, thinking of this very night. I shall try to hum, lamentably because of my creaking lungs and rusty throat, that little chanson they are playing now. I shall see through the mist of blur, blind eyes the ghostly vision of these dangling little lamps, and I shall mistake the breath of death itself for a memory of this chill evening air."

Mrs. Wayne shuddered a little. "You are in a sad humor tonight," she said lightly.

But D'Erys paid no heed to the interruption. "I wonder why I am so sure of remembering this particular night! Are you unusually beautiful? Or did you take particularly less of the cham-

pagne and I consequently particularly more? Never mind that—we must yet have another bottle.”

She shook her head. “We are happy enough playing with the cacao,” she said.

“We must have another bottle of champagne, *garçon*,” said D'Erys. He lighted another cigarette as the man removed the coffee-cups and little liqueur glasses. “No, truly,” said he with the first puff, blowing the smoke far from him with a deep breath. “To-night has its unusual charms. For the first part, it is the thirty-eighth time we have dined alone together. For the rest, we are going to do it again.”

“You are a child,” said Sidney Wayne, with tenderness.

“But you love me!” returned D'Erys triumphantly. Then, “Don't you feel the particular charm of this particular night? We must do just the very same thing often, often—come here, sit at this little table, eat the same things, and have our little disputes over the second bottle. And I will tell you again and again how I shall remember it when I am old, so that when your hair is white, too, you will say to yourself, ‘Lucien is thinking of me now—he has moved his cold old bones out into the sunlight and he is humming in his cracked voice the “*Dernier Baiser*.”’ I wonder,” he said, with another change, “I wonder, Mignonne, when we shall taste that bitter finality. Do you think it will be the last, unknown to us at the time, or will it come to us in all familiar trappings and with wailing outcries?” He laid his hand over hers again. “Do you think that dreadful hour lies ahead of us, when I will say to myself, and you will say to yourself, as our lips meet: ‘It is the last time, it is the last time?’”

“Don't, don't!” she said softly, the tears rising to her eyes.

“I don't believe it will be so—it rarely is,” commented D'Erys. “The probabilities are that it will be the lightest, fleetest, least-considered kiss of all, like the centime the rich man tosses away. Only afterward, when the days that were to know other and more

golden kisses, when they come by empty, beggared, loveless—then how that little, lightly-flung kiss will haunt the one of us that is left. What an infinitely pathetic thing life is! As some silly person said years ago, the flowers die in the dry earth for want of a drop of water, and over the bare rocks where no flower could gain a foothold the water pours ceaselessly. Here are you, flower of flowers, in a desert. And thousands of miles away from you your ass of a husband is engaged in the huge undertaking of finding a water supply for some land company's unavailable farms. Just heaven, what would not I give to have his opportunity to care for you, to fill your life, to make you happy!” He paused and then said deliberately, “I would make you the happiest woman in all the world.”

“I know you would—because you do!” she answered daringly.

“Do I?” he mused, regarding her. “That is an odd thing. I don't think I ever made anyone happy in all my life before. Think what an existence that is to remember! But if you are telling me the truth—if I really have made you happy, even for a day, I shall not regret the rest.”

“You never did regret the rest,” she wisely said. He smiled at her. “I never did. But I might, some day.”

“When you are old and cracked and wheezy?”

“Who knows?”

He lighted a fresh cigarette with the one nearly consumed.

Presently, with eyes that regarded her in a contemplation eloquent of achieved desire, he seemed to see as well into the future, though a future much more immediate than that of which they had been talking. Indeed, so immediate was it that he expressed it and a vast deal more besides when, with an inquiring twist to his eyebrows and the pleading of a hand laid over hers, he leaned toward her slowly through the haze and smoke, and, partly as a prediction, partly as a question and partly as a command, he said the single word, “*Demain?*”

V

SHE found Cressida sitting, still fully dressed, in their little salon, and a brief look of annoyance shadowed her. She was, however, too overflowing with the radiance of happiness to let the slight matter of Cressida's apparent eagerness to continue her moral lecture trouble her for any greater length of time.

"You are still up?" she said easily. She was conscious of a desire to go to bed, perhaps more conscious of that than of any other thing.

Cressida had no answer for this except her own indubitable presence. But Mrs. Wayne asked another question: "Have you been alone all evening?" She came further toward the centre-table at which Cressida was sitting, unfastening her long coat. Her fingers seemed feverish and uncertain. But it was her eyes that held the girl's attention. There was in them a starriness whose voice goes forth to the end of the world. She seemed breathless, dazed, exultant. Cressida's heart contracted in a beat, and a kind of terror caught her by the throat in the sharp pain of the constriction.

"No," she said, her mind not at all upon her answer. "Mr. Witter came in and he took me out to get a little supper. Antoine's baby is very ill and he had no one to send for my dinner."

"Ah, then you are not sitting up for me," said the other, with an empty laugh. She, with her long coat now over her bare arm, started for the door of her room.

"But I am," said Cressida. "I wanted to be sure you received this."

"What?" asked Sidney, turning.

Cressida put her finger on the envelope of a despatch lying in front of her and pushed it across the table toward Mrs. Wayne, without taking her eyes from her flushed, radiant face. She felt her own voice to have become too uncertain to make any verbal reply. Sidney came back to the table and looked at it. "Oh!" she said.

The unnatural pause that followed

seemed longer to Cressida than it really was. The woman sat down in a chair beside the table and began in silence to draw off her other glove.

When the tension became unendurable Cressida spoke. "Aren't you going to open it?" she asked.

Mrs. Wayne looked up at her. "Open what? The despatch? Oh, yes!"

She leaned forward and picked it up, tearing it open raggedly with the same feverish touch. She spread the inner page before her on the table.

Then it seemed to Cressida that she became very still, as if even her breathing and heart-beating ceased, as if every fiber of the woman's body became motionless. The little clock in the room hammered louder and louder in the silence.

When Sidney Wayne lifted her face it had a look of dazed despair that frightened Cressida. "There was a letter," she said dully. The girl went at once to fetch it, opening it herself as she returned, and putting it under the nerveless hand spread out upon the table. Instinctively she brought her a glass of water, and held it for her. Mrs. Wayne took it and drank it almost unconsciously.

The distressing silence had begun anew as Mrs. Wayne sat there motionless, her eyes slowly following line after line of the closely written pages. Cressida watched her sadly, watched the color gradually fade from her cheeks, the starry light go from her eyes, the smile withdrawn from her mouth. It was as if the woman's life and youth were being blotted out before her eyes.

One page turned and then another, but finally, before the letter was half read, Sidney Wayne's eyes wandered from it and stared without seeing at the empty air. So long she sat so that Cressida touched her on the arm in a distressed inability to endure the suspense.

"Sidney dear—" she said gently, "what is it? Won't you tell me?"

Still with her fixed eyes staring stonily ahead Sidney Wayne pushed the despatch in her general direction. Taking it as a permission to read the

message, Cressida picked it up, her anxious eyes hastily devouring the words.

Breakfast with you and Cressida tomorrow.

GREGORY.

Ah! how glad she was! What an immensity of relief, of happiness! He was coming—it was all settled, all settled, all over. No more days and evenings of gnawing anxieties, no more nights of sleepless questionings, no more frantic helplessness, no more shameful fears. And thank God he was coming to stand between this poor soul and a possible miserable disgrace, the possible cut direct, the possible wicked scandal. In the overwhelming relief the message brought her actually for a moment her own selfish joy was quite inundated. But in an instant more it came to her, buoyantly. He had thought of her, too—it was a pleasure to him to anticipate her presence at his journey's end. Oh, the dear words—"and Cressida tomorrow!"

Mrs. Wayne started suddenly to her feet, crushing the many pages of the letter between her two hands.

"I can't bear it, I can't bear it!" she said with fierceness. Then her voice changed, and though she said again the same words, "I can't bear it," she moaned desperately.

Cressida stood for one horror-stricken instant merely staring after her, but instinctive sympathy with any pain, however uncomprehended, sent her a moment later to the woman's side. "Sidney dear—if only I could help you."

"Help me? Help me?" sneered Mrs. Wayne, shaking her touch rudely from her. "How can you help me—how can anyone? What is there for me but just misery and misery and misery?" She flung out her arms as if she were crucified, and the tears gathered in her eyes so rapidly that in an instant they were wetting her cheeks. "For a few months, just a few weeks, I have been happy. Is that much? Why should he come now to take it all away from me?

What have I ever done to him that he should crush all the joy out of me?"

"Are you talking of Gregory?"

"Whom else, whom else! Oh, I know he is your demigod—you have never had to live with him! Oh, my God, when I think of those weary days!" She clenched her hands as they fell to her sides. "The dreary barrenness of my life with him!"

A spark burned hotly in Cressida's eyes, but she went again gently to the woman and laid her hand on her arm. "My dear," she said kindly, and in an odd fashion seeming for the moment the older of the two, "you are not quite yourself just now. In the first place your nerves have been put on edge by the wine you have had, and you are strung up to a pitch far above normal. Believe me, you are not the unlucky woman you think yourself, nor are you going to be unhappy, either, without this unnatural single life you are leading here. If by taking it all away you mean that Gregory has come to fetch you home with him, you have a much better and more substantial and more satisfying happiness in your future than in the present."

Mrs. Wayne listened to her in weary disdain. "I wish Gregory had married you!" she said hopelessly. "You are just the woman for him—the straight-haired, cool-cheeked, breakfast-at-eight kind of woman, with enthusiasm concerning table linen and flour by the barrel." She laughed a little hysterically at her own words. "As for me, I hate it, and I hate it, and I hate it! Gregory doesn't understand me at all—he makes me want to kill myself just to get rid of him."

Cressida Predmore was trying with the greater part of her strength to control the fire of anger whose sparks flickered in her eyes, and the increasing effort made her voice unlike its usual tone. "You are overwrought, Sidney; you don't mean what you are saying."

The other woman suddenly burst into a speaking rage, her face glowing, her hands vehement. "I mean more, more, much more! Gregory is a wearisome prig, and I don't love him

at all—I don't, even though I have always pretended to him that I did because it made life pleasanter. I would give ten years of my life right now, and become middle-aged, if I could by so doing regain my freedom. What do you know about it—you, a little cold, rule-of-thumb old maid, who never had an emotion beyond saying good-bye to your father? You with your safe, cool, well-regulated heart, and your wide, blank eyes! You don't know what it is to hate someone just for living, to love someone just for the loving. I would change places with any human being who has the freedom I lack. Why should I tie myself down forever to a life that bores me to the point of screaming? What is my compensation? What do I get out of it? Where is the inducement? No, no, no—I won't, I won't, I won't!"

Cressida's face was cold and set. "I don't know what you are talking about, and I don't think you do either. It is my impression that you have taken altogether too much champagne and are not responsible. I advise you to go to bed." She turned toward her own room, but Sidney's lifted voice held her a moment.

"It's ridiculous of you to say that, and you know it. I am just as responsible as you are, even if I am not made of rock. You are like a dial with thirty-nine articles numbered out on you, and you point at them each in turn and never get anywhere. You have a lot of rules and theories and no knowledge of life at all. And like all other stupid people who think they are good just because they run in a block like silly sheep, you are quite willing to be unjust and cruel and narrow-minded and of no more help to any human being than a square of wall-paper." Her voice suddenly broke and became tearful again. "Oh, go away," she said grievously. "I am suffering and you merely goad me into crying out. How stupid you are, you and your goodness!"

Uncertainly Cressida regarded her. Surely she was in a quandary. She

did want to help her, to comfort her. If it were only for Gregory's sake she would have wished it, and beyond that she had a fondness for the vain, shallow woman that she could not have explained, and wanted to aid her for her own sake as well. Sidney Wayne dropped her coat over her arm and made wearily for her own room. It suggested to Cressida that she might possibly offer the minor balm of a willing service.

"Can't I help you to undress, Sidney? I should be so glad to if you want me."

Mrs. Wayne turned her face to her, her hand upon the door. "You have hurt me to the quick once too often," she said with a concentrated anger in her voice. "Don't come near me!" She went on into her bedroom, and closed the door and locked it.

Usually quite frank with herself, she knew subconsciously that the champagne had indeed befogged her mind a little and that she was in an abnormal mood. But the very cause itself prevented her from realizing this to the point of acting in accordance, and she still strove to decide what she should do.

In the first place, it had all come so unexpectedly, so suddenly. She had been thinking—and very seldom at that—of Gregory as at an immeasurable distance from her, across an immensity of ocean and of continent, and here without a moment's warning she received his word for it that he would be with her in the early morning. Far from him as she had imagined herself to be in the flesh, the distance was nothing compared to spiritual éloignement. As an actual consideration, Gregory had for the present passed out of her life. To be sure she somewhat indefinitely recognized the fact that at some future day she would be brought face to face with the plan for her return to him, but hers was a nature which found sufficient unto the day the interests thereof.

If, as D'Ery had said, she filled his life, it was no less true that at the present he filled hers, and that in her extravagant fashion she was lavishing upon

him the utmost romanticism of which her emotional self was capable. She had become completely absorbed in the pleasurable excitement of the new relationship, and as he played his part quite as well as she played hers it was not to be wondered at that the matter had assumed its present undeniable proportions. So engrossed had she allowed herself to become that Cressida's appeals and others' less charitable innuendoes had fallen on deaf ears, but now the sudden imminence of Gregory's arrival had come like a sharp blow to arouse her to a sense of realities.

The maddening thought that she was powerless for lack of opportunity beset her sorely. It was then after midnight—Gregory would be with her in the early morning. And she was to have driven with D'Erys to a favorite and suburban inn for luncheon!

Cressida had been quite right when she said that Sidney had taken more champagne than was compatible with reasonable mental process, and the bewildered woman found herself quite unable to think out what it was that she felt she must do. Her first impulse was to go to D'Erys and put the whole matter in his hands, but that was impossible with Cressida sitting in the salon unconsciously guarding the door. She could not even make an excuse to go to the telephone—the nearest public wire was in a drug shop two squares away. Cressida would insist on accompanying her, and the canard of needing a light sleeping-powder would be inevitably unsuccessful. Why didn't the fool go to bed? she asked herself furiously.

She came at last to the determination of waiting until Cressida should retire to her room, and then of stealing out unheard at whatever hour that blessed opportunity might be granted, conciliating the apothecary after disturbing his rest with a generous gift of money, and telephoning for advice to D'Erys. She continued to walk her room feverishly on fire with anxiety to communicate her distress to her lover and maddened by impotent rage that

the girl should so perversely block her design.

As a matter of fact, in the abnormal physical condition of the woman, her mood was a dangerous one. Not infrequently during her life with her husband their temperamental differences had wrought a situation of, to her, intolerable displeasure and under unnatural nervous tension from causes similar or dissimilar to the present had been tempted to desperation. Had the means been at hand she might on one or two occasions have attempted to end her life, and the fact that she was always content to find herself still alive on the following day had never taught her its lesson. "Strung to an abnormal pitch," as Cressida had said, and face to face with what for the time being at all events was an abysmal grief—the separation forever from the man she loved—there was a madness in her very blood that would have terrified the younger woman.

But Cressida remained calmly seated at the table, looking at the dear assurance of Gregory's coming, and dividing her mind between the relief and pleasure she found in that event, and in uncertain fear for his happiness, whose foundation had been proved by Sidney's wild words so dubious. She imagined the angry woman as probably in bed, probably sobbing herself to sleep, and thought the two things undoubtedly the best remedies for her hysterical condition. But sleep found its way to her at last, and long before it was to visit Sidney Wayne Cressida put out the lights and shut herself in her little room.

With what impatient relief the sound of the closing door came to Mrs. Wayne's ears was evidenced in the manner in which she caught up her coat and put it on over her handsome gown. The money for the sleepy apothecary was not forgotten—poor Sidney Wayne could not bear to be disliked by anyone.

Her heart beat hurtfully in her throat as she stood with her hand on the knob of the door, turning it slowly and firmly and silently. The uncanni-

ness of the situation struck her with something akin to terror as she faced the dark, empty room. Suppose Cressida's door should suddenly open opposite and she be revealed in her out-of-door garments? Suppose she should stumble against some cursed, inanimate, senseless tool of mischance and Cressida should be aroused by the noise? The silence of the deserted room was intensified by the loud martellate strokes of the industrious clock.

She forced herself to wait until the darkness lightened somewhat to her eyes, although she was tortured by the impulse to hurry from the place. She had closed and locked her own door noiselessly behind her. When dimly the objects in the room ranged themselves in her vision, she lifted her skirts that their silken murmur should not betray her, and made her way silently to the salon door. What if here, on the very threshold of success, her plan should fail?

Once in the corridor with the door shut at her back, she paused and drew a difficult breath. Under the most normal conditions the nervous strain would have been sufficient to distress her, but with trembling hands and uncertain steps and a hysterical giddiness in her head to combat, the task of making her way secretly from the house was no easy one. Still she considered the hardest part accomplished, and carefully she began the descent of the stair.

Nerve-racked as she was, she almost screamed when suddenly a door on the floor she had just reached came open and lights shone all about her. She was on a level with the street and the room was somewhat behind her. She turned, frightened beyond the power to speak.

It was Antoine, with a candle in one hand and a paper in the other. He stared at her, startled.

"What is it?"

"Madame is going out?"

The questions were simultaneous. It was she who answered hers.

"I am going to the telephone—a

matter of the greatest importance." She explained because she was not sensible enough to realize that it was unnecessary. "I found a despatch waiting for me when I came in."

"To the telephone—" repeated Antoine, totally uninterested in her necessity for communicating with quiconque at that hour. "At the apothecary shop?"

"Yes."

"*Bon Dieu, quelle chance!* If madame would take this with her? They could put it in a bottle while madame telephoned. I was just going myself, but God knows it is hard to leave the *bébé* when he may be dead before I return. For the sake of our great distress, if madame would. It is for the dreadful pain."

She was holding out her hand. Irrationally the situation seemed to be affording her a tellable excuse to carry out her own wishes. She need not be afraid to waken Cressida on coming in. "Give it to me," she said hurriedly. She was all impatience to be gone.

"Madame is not afraid to go alone?"

"No, no," she said hastily, fearing illogically that he might offer to accompany her. She rushed past him in that apprehension and hurried out. It was not until she had walked half a square in the cool air that she realized he would hardly have been likely to do so.

The delay in arousing the chemist wrought her to a pitch of frenzy. When he sleepily answered her pathetic bell-pulling by putting his head out of his window and demanding surlily to know what anyone wanted at such an hour, she offered him more money than she had before recklessly planned in the ridiculous fear that he would refuse to let her in. But willingly enough would he have been aroused every night for such a price, and replying that he would keep her waiting only an instant—*seulement le temps pour passer des pantalons*—he withdrew his head from the window with reassuring promptitude.

Rather amazed was he to find that she wanted to telephone while he pre-

pared the medicine, but there was no law forbidding it, and had there been the twenty-franc note she had thrust into his delighted hand would have done much toward procuring her a special dispensation.

Devoured with insupportable impatience she tried and tried to get into communication with D'Erys's apartments. The chemist finished his task and stood leaning on the counter, placidly watching her, listening to her supplications and planning what he should do with the twenty francs.

After what seemed to her an eternity, and what was in reality a long while as the sleepy chemist would testify, a vague yawning "Allo!" came to her over the telephone. Faint as it was she recognized that it was not D'Erys's voice.

"Gustave, is that you?" she cried.

"*Mais oui, madame,*" came sleepily, disgustedly to her ear.

The moment seemed to stand out of all those that had made up her life as the most poignantly important.

"*Il faut que je parle à monsieur. N'importe s'il dort. Quelque chose d'importance.*" Her words stumbled into the insensate mouthpiece in their piteous eagerness. She must speak to monsieur—God knows how true that was. What indeed if he were asleep?

"But monsieur is not here, madame," drawled Gustave. "He said to expect him at eleven tomorrow."

The horrible disappointment fairly sickened her. "But I must speak to him—tomorrow won't do. Where is he? Have they a telephone?"

"*Connais pas, madame.* Monsieur did not say where he was going. Sorry, madame. Any message?"

She sat like one stunned. The collecting of her wits seemed to surpass her powers. "Any message? Allo!" said the voice in her ear. "Wait," she said helplessly. Then mechanically her mind evolved a message to prevent disaster, although her thoughts were wholly on the dreadful fact that she had not found help in her trouble. "Tell him not to come to my house tomorrow," she said. The drowsy

voice murmured, "*Ben, madame. C'est tout, madame?*"

She did not answer. The despair of the thing stifled her. She felt half-dead, half-stupefied.

The chemist had found the conversation trivial enough—a mere disarrangement of rendezvous. He straightened himself as she turned toward him and pushed the bottle toward her.

"You are aware of the nature of the contents of that bottle?" He went through the formality even as he gave it to her.

"It is not for me—I know nothing about it," she said dully as she slipped it into her muff.

"Well, the prescription is all right. But it is a deadly poison."

She stood still looking at him vacantly.

"It's all right, madame. I have put a dropper into the package. Tell whoever uses it to be careful not to give more than five drops. There's enough in the bottle to kill a man."

She stood an instant after his voice had ceased, still staring stupidly. Then she turned and went out. He followed her to the door to fasten it after her, and he laughed and yawned together. "Pretty well upset by the disarrangement of her rendezvous," he said as he went back to his dreams, now gilded with the pleasurable twenty francs.

Still with the stupid, blank look on her face, and still unable to think connectedly, she turned homeward. Solely by force of habit she found her way across the two short squares and to the house, for she was not considering the direction of her steps. As when she had gone out, a door opened on her approaching it. A man's figure in a greatcoat stood outlined against the light inside the house, before he partially closed the door. Then seeing her upon the steps, he stood politely aside, pushing the door open again with his gloved hand.

"The child is dead, madame," he said quietly. "There is no need for the medicine. I ordered it only to soothe poor Antoine's implorations. It was

good of you to trouble. I will take it, please."

She turned her blank look on him. "I have not got it," she said. "The chemist is going to bring it around." She was not in the least conscious of the cerebation which led to this falsehood. She was almost surprised herself in her apathy that she should have told so purposeless a lie.

"Oh, very well." The doctor turned to go. "He will probably not leave it when he hears the child is dead. One learns to be careful of dangerous drugs in a house of grief. Good night, madame."

"Good night," she echoed.

Still with the stupid, blank look on her face, and still unable to think connectedly, she went up the stairs, deaf to the piteous weeping of the bereaved mother and father, through the little salon, quietly, but without guilty fear of noise, and unlocking her door went into her room and stopping short before her mirror stared at herself, so standing.

"I don't believe it is really happening," she said, but softly. "Antoine's baby is alive, and I never go out alone at night." Her hands drew the package from her muff even while she stared at her reflection, and took from the bottle the paper wrapped about it.

"It is very hard to drink things out of a bottle," she said consideringly. She shook the dark liquid and looked at it with anxiety. "I know it has a horrid taste," she said as she laid it down.

Slowly she took off her hat and cloak and crossing the room put them carefully away. She noticed the shelves and hooks seemed nearer to her than they really were, and twice she tried to fasten her coat upon the empty air. As she turned back the walls of the room began a curious upward movement, yet she knew—of course she knew—they were really quite still. If they really did go up in that absurd creeping fashion the house would fall down, naturally. And yet—how funny! How could a house fall down

if the walls went up? She laughed softly at the silly notion.

Then, catching sight of herself in the mirror again, she held herself erect at the dressing-table and forced herself to arouse her wits.

"Cress said I had had too much champagne," she said. "I guess I have! But what does it matter?"

She clumsily unfastened her gown and let it fall to the floor about her—her eyes ever on the brown bottle among the dainty disorder of the bureau. "The excitement kept me together—the anxiety—the terror—whatever it was. I wonder how different this would all be if only Lucien had been at home tonight?"

She began to take down her pretty, brown coils of hair, and then abruptly left the mass half-hanging as her tremulous hands caught up the bottle. With a twist she pulled the cork and emptied the contents into a glass on the dressing-table.

"There isn't such an awful lot of it—but I know it tastes horridly." She lifted it near her face and suddenly put it down. "I'd better not smell it," she said, with a shiver.

A wave of nausea swept over her, and she saw in the mirror her face grow gray. "It can't be true, it can't be true!" she said in a whisper, staring at herself. "He said I would remember when I was old and gray." Then as she moved one hand to steady herself, her palm came down upon a mass of crushed paper. Without looking at it, her fingers felt it over. "Gregory's letter," she said; "Gregory's letter!"

Self-pity brought the tears into her eyes. "Oh, how alone I am!" she moaned. "How miserable, and how alone! Lucien—Lucien—when I need you so!" Her trembling hand continually felt of the crisp, crushed paper. "Gregory—Lucien—Gregory!" she said in the delirious whisper. "Oh, my God, I can't, I can't!"

Then silently she stood, albeit swaying perceptibly, though now she leaned heavily upon the palm upon his letter. Twice her poor hand stretched out toward the brown lethal water, and

faltered. A confused mass of thoughts mobbed her brain. There were bits of things Lucien had said, flashes of memory of her old dull life with Gregory, a kaleidoscopic series of pictures of wonderful hours with the man she loved, premonitory agonies of that future that should eternally separate them, and through it all immeasurably the conviction that life divorced from this love was impossible and that she wanted to die.

While she was standing so the faint, gray shadows of the coming sunrise crept up the sky. She noticed the almost imperceptible change in the light in the room.

Then that phenomenon which doctors call "busy delirium" passed and was gone. Her mind was going to sleep, smothered in that anesthetic fume of wine. She said dully to the faintly chill air about her, "You are the day that brings Gregory and takes me away."

There was no hesitation about her blind hand as it stretched toward the glass, lifted it, and put it in her mouth. At three violent gulps she swallowed the heavy brown liquid and let the glass fall upon the bureau again—her other hand about her throat.

"Oh, God!" she said stupidly. "Oh, God!"

VI

CRESSIDA, after her offer to help Sidney undress had been repulsed, went back to the table where she had been sitting with the despatch before her, and sat down wearily. In spite of her conviction that champagne and false love had much to do with the woman's attitude toward the future, and that one was as temporary a lens as the other, she was troubled about the immediate morrow.

Sidney had told the truth certainly when she said she had always more or less pretended to love Gregory—just to keep the atmosphere untroubled, she who could not endure discomfort. And perhaps for the old cause and in

the old habit, she could go on from tomorrow with the deception, and the image of the other man would fade slowly or quickly, according to her evanescent mood. But what a foundation for a man to build his house upon—lies, insincerity and make-believe! She framed her forehead in her hands as she sat leaning forward into their support. For a long while she sat, musing on the strangeness of a life that forced one woman to pretend she loved and forced another to pretend she did not love.

At last, weary with her doubts and apprehensions and realizing herself too heavy with sleep to reach any helpful conclusion as to her own course in carrying out her determination to stand between Sidney and self-revelation, between Gregory and disillusionment, she put out the lights of the little salon and not without one uncertain, backward look at the other forbiddingly closed door, went into her own room, and delivered herself to sleep.

Disturbing dreams in disconnected fragments like ill-fitting shards of colored glass cast their contrasting influence upon her sleep. Vainly and with sometimes comic effect she strove to fit together the distorted figures of the actual world, Antoine's baby and Lucien D'Erys and her father. And the good *concierge* would continually come to tell her that the *petite marionette* was dead and wipe away with Gregory's despatch the continual stream of champagne that Sidney poured upon her hand from a large red bottle. Sleeping restlessly and not deeply, she waked in the vague dawn with a start, hearing, she was confident, in the air about her the still, poised syllables of her name. She sat upright listening for its repetition, but no sound came to confirm the impression, and she lay down again drowsily. But the sudden waking had been like the startling withdrawal of a curtain, and though she strove to keep herself from absolute arousal, closing her eyes and trying to close her mind to the returning day and its problems, the insistent fact and

light penetrated her consciousness, and thoughts and conjectures of the day then being born crowded in thickly and vanquished the less disturbing visions of her dream.

As bed was ever intolerable to her awake, she rose and put on a loose room-gown over her nightdress. She would get a book from the other room and read until it came time to dress. As she opened the door she saw that the door of Sidney's room was also ajar, and an impulse to cross and close it, lest her being about should disturb the poor woman who needed sleep, was arrested by a sound, faint enough, but unmistakable. After an instant's immovability, she ran noiselessly to the hall door, and out into the hall. Leaning over the baluster she could hear it more plainly; a wild sobbing and incoherent words. Guessing the pitiable truth, she went softly down the stairs toward the sound. Antoine's baby must be dead. And poor Célestine was beside herself with grief. There might be something that she could do for them.

She found confirmation of all her conjectures when she entered quietly. Poor Antoine, his face red and swollen with weeping, was trying to restrain the over-abandoned grief of the young mother. Resting on the little bed, in a natural repose, was the little creature who had blazed a path away from pain and tears.

Antoine was glad to see her come in, though he did not relax his tender, compelling hold upon the frantic woman. She was on her knees beside the child's bed, and Antoine on a chair held her close to him and gently. Over her disheveled hair he thanked Cressida with a poor smile for her coming. "*Monsieur le médecin* goes to return. Poor little woman—poor Célestine—do not cry so, dear, my dear!" His own tears fell upon her cheeks as he laid his face near hers. "The good God will be kind to our little baby. He loves His little children, Célestine."

Cressida Predmore stroked the wild hair that had been so mercilessly torn,

and looked with awe at the majestic little figure of death on the bed. Antoine released one arm long enough to wipe the tears from his eyes. Célestine's sobs continued to wrench her slender little body cruelly, and the words of a maniac babbled from her lips.

Cressida spoke to Antoine softly. "She should have a quieting potion—she will make herself very ill."

Antoine nodded. "The doctor himself has gone for it. He will be here in a moment."

Cressida continued to stroke the rough hair and to speak gentle words of understanding to the grief-tortured woman. Then at Antoine's request she brought him a cup of the inky coffee that still steamed on the stove in the next room. It gave him nerve, he said, and advised her brokenly to follow his example.

The faintness of a wakeful dawn was upon her, and she was glad to comply. But as she turned with her own big cup in her hands, the step for which they waited was hurrying down the hall, and with just a whispered word to Antoine to be sure to call her if she could be of any help to Célestine or himself, she slipped out as the doctor entered, and returned upstairs.

She went slowly, carrying in her mind the look of the recumbent child invested with such unwonted dignity. It was the first time she had ever seen a dead child. Older people laid softly down in that insistent sleep had somehow a look of having been excused from further labors. But how incongruously had that majesty encircled the brows of the little child who so few days before had begged for bonbons! Was it not strange—a few hours ago it had been defensibly corrected in some slight misdemeanor with a startling but unhurtful slap. How reverent today would be the hands that touched the frail white cheek! How suddenly had the little head assumed its pre-mature, compellant crown!

Perhaps the sudden, nervous awakening from sleep, the unlooked-for sight of death in the little house, the

overwrought abandon of the despairing mother, had made her supersensitive to suggestion in her surroundings. Certain it is that as she closed the door of the little salon she leaned against it with a sudden weakness, the heavy cup of coffee rattling and lurching against the saucer that she held.

The open door of Sidney's room had taken on the symbolism of destiny. Sidney was gone. She felt it. She knew it. Just as she could see with her eyes in that pitiless gray morning light that there was no one else in the room with her, so she could feel with those unnatural nerves which had never before been bared to sensation that there was no other living soul but herself in that apartment.

Sidney was gone! Gone to D'Erys? The very day that was to bring Gregory lay all about her like a field of daisies. Sidney was gone. She felt the emptiness in the air about her. The open door was like an open mouth laughing.

Cressida took an unsteady step or two toward it. "Oh, God!" she whispered stupidly, "oh, God!" The same groping prayer had gone up to the same hearing some hours before from other lips; from other lips stained brown.

Then her eyes fell upon the raggedly torn envelope of the despatch, and as if it had been a sharply spoken word in Gregory's own voice it roused her. Whatever had happened, something could be done, something must be done to make it easier for him.

Unseeing her hand put the heavy cup upon the table. She caught her room-gown up in both hands as she went quickly toward the open, laughing door. People sometimes left messages—she might before Gregory arrived get her back again.

On the threshold she was stopped as by the barrel of a pistol. The cold, unsympathetic light of the morning lay across the room, across the bed. Sidney was lying there still dressed in her underclothing.

A sickening disgust swept over the girl in the reaction of finding her there

in the flesh where she had expected emptiness.

It couldn't be that! Surely she could have undressed before the lethargy of the wine!

Pungent and acrid, a thin, faint smell of something strange came to her nostrils. If a terrible truth could have had a blossom, the odor of it might have been this suggestion.

It came to her slowly, unrealized at the first. Something of the waking strangeness, the vague appreciation of change that might come to a child in the bearing, stirred at the very foundation of her mental structure. The apprehension seemed to encompass her slowly, as the flames of a fagot fire might engulf a sacrifice.

Sidney was gone. She had felt it, known it, heard the gossip of it in the very motes of air she breathed. Sidney was gone—but oh, in how different a manner from that she had believed! She stood at the threshold looking in rigidly.

The accustomed look of the room made it hard to believe. The glove on the floor—was it possible the hand that had thrown it there could never lift it up nor wear it? What had become of that one attribute of Sidney's heart that made it beat? What had become of the sight of her eyes, the speech of her mouth? What was it that had gone out of her that had answered to her name?

Had it been just because Death had found his way into the house, through that lower floor where his hand had plucked the soul of that little child as one would pick a buttercup? Was it so—that he had come up those very stairs, a grim, awesome specter, and seeing her in all her beauty had wreaked his power on her to spirit her away?

As one would prick a balloon her frozen mood vanished. Cressida, with a suffering cry, jumped forward, caught the inert figure in her arms and shook it violently.

"Sidney! Sidney!" she screamed.

She dragged her from the bed and stood her upon her feet, trying to make her walk. But it was impossible for

her even with her supernatural strength to sustain the inanimate weight. She let the body slip back upon the bed and then after staring wildly at it a moment, her hands brushing her hair backward from her face, she turned and ran into the hall.

"Doctor, doctor!" she cried, leaning over the rail.

She waited for no answer to the distraught appeal, but rushing back, caught up the cup of coffee as she hurried past. She was then subconsciously aware of an effort not to spill the coffee on her gown.

Sidney was lying just as she had dropped her in a heap too expressive of departed volition. She caught her up against her breast where the heart promised well to burst with its beating.

"Sidney! Sidney!" she called again. She put up the cup to the still lips, but the blackish coffee only trickled down over the chin. With a gasp, she abandoned that attempt and ran back into the hall. As she leaned over the balustrade her face came directly above a face looking up from below into hers.

"*Docteur!*" she cried. "*Venez, venez vite! J'ai peur que madame ne soit morte—*" Without waiting to finish one sentence she fled back into the bedroom. She could hear the doctor's steps coming by jumps up the stairway.

She rushed to the dying woman on the bed, lifting her into a sitting posture and shaking her violently.

"Sidney! wake up!" she screamed in the deaf ears, her fingers pressing into the soft flesh of the cold arms as she flung her to and fro.

"Oh, my God, help me! Oh, God, help me! Oh, Sidney, wake up!" She shook the inert body incessantly. She was still doing it when the quick running of feet in the hall stopped at the door with a long slide on the carpet, and the doctor burst in.

Words as few as the shots of a duel passed between them. He saw at a glance as much as she had seen. And the evidence of one sniff at the bottle and glass on the bureau, combined with

his knowledge of the prescription he had written earlier and the remembrance of what he saw now had been a falsehood in her denial of the possession of the medicine, gave him the data he needed.

Between them they got the coffee into her throat and he taught her how to slap the still face with a cold towel, while he injected stimulants and rubbed the arms and legs. Antoine came up, but after a grief-sodden look of incomprehension went back to his own despair.

It seemed to go on for hours. But Cressida gained encouragement from the doctor's persistence. Surely if he knew—if he was sure there was no hope he would not work so hard, so continuously, so breathlessly.

This did not occur to her until she realized he was working more rapidly. She had been following his bullet-like directions blindly, mechanically—as promptly as any mechanism could have obeyed a hand on the lever. But suddenly she had felt a new impetus thrill along his nerves, his muscles, to hers. They redoubled their efforts. They were working with a living person.

It became more real to her after a moment. She could see in his rising color, in the feverishness of his manipulation, in the breathlessness of his anxiety, the indications of a change in their chances. She flung the most vital force of her own overstrung power into the cold, quiet body. It seemed, indeed, their determination must communicate an animation to the supine tissues under their touch.

Then came that terrible moment that Cressida should never forget until that something that had called itself Cressida should pass from her lips and leave her body tenantless. It was heralded by a sharp catch of breath in the doctor's throat, seeming sudden omnipresence of his hands. Had he been Briareus with fifty arms he could not have seemed to do more things at once.

Sidney's eyelids fluttered. To Cressida it seemed as if a grave had opened and a living being had stepped forth.

"Sidney! Sidney!" she screamed, striking the woman's face unmercifully with the wet cloth, "Sidney! Sidney!"

From somewhere in the ether round about the vagrant soul was drawn back and arrested in its passage. The eyelids fluttered, the cold hand unclosed a trifle—showing within it the gold case of the miniature still threaded with a broken chain.

Cressida leaned over, her eyes devouring the face so reluctantly turning from the other shore. The physician, his breath coming in short gasps, exhausted and excited, was filling his hypodermic.

Sidney's eyelids fluttered and Cressida saw the pupils of the eyes contracted to mere needle points.

"Sidney!" she called loudly.

From how far the fretful soul had returned with its message, who can say? The hand moved perceptibly, the hand that held the gold case of the miniature, still threaded with the slender chain as if torn from her neck in her agony. The lips moved. Cressida, insane with excitement, stooped nearer, crying aloud, "Speak to me—Sidney, Sidney!" Her voice was almost jubilant with their success.

The woman had elected to spend that spangle of existence upon her own sorry secret. With all the grains of strength within her yet undissolved, she drugged her voice into existence, she forced her half-dead self to the expression of a wish a nobler nature might have long before forgotten in the face of death. The one thing in all her life that was to show that latent courage in the weakest soul came then to pass, when poisons and religions and their sins were all forgotten.

The cold hand moved and the stiff lips whispered, "Lucien."

The word hovered in the air like the voice of a disembodied spirit, unearthly in its ghost-like, clear enunciation. It came just as the doctor bent over her, baring her breast to his needle. Cressida caught up the miniature, as it might be in his way, and slipped it into the pocket of her room-gown.

She did not know it, a few moments

later, as did the doctor, that though they had forced the wandering soul back for an instant into its old abode, they had been unable to keep it there. She did not know when she saw the doctor's jaw set wide, and his brows draw into line above his determined eyes, that they had failed.

She took no account of all that happened, it seemed for a long time after this, until she saw him doing something wholly new. He laid down the sleeping woman quietly, took a flat bottle from his pocket and poured into a drinking-glass an inch or more of brandy. To her amazement, he came to her, putting his arm about her neck, holding her chin upon his wrist, and lifted the goblet to her lips. She had drunk the burning stimulant before she could utter a sound. He partially released her to fill the glass with water from the carafe near at hand, and she drained it eagerly to allay the painful feeling in her throat. Then he turned his compassionate eyes to her and spoke to her tenderly.

"Can you walk to bed, do you think? I will help you—you are all broken down—you must rest."

She felt suddenly powerless to stand, and was aware that he had pulled a chair nearer with his foot and had let her down upon it carefully.

"Sidney—?" she said.

"A doctor's duty is toward the living," he answered, as gently as he could.

Cressida remembered afterward only a great cloud of black settling down about her with sudden suffocating velocity, and she felt someone lift her in unfaltering arms and carry her away.

VII

ENOUGH hours to have made a very ample two days seemed to have elapsed, as Cressida lay on her bed thinking it all over, since the last set of sun. She seemed to have endured in that time the rack of physical torture, and there is no other known

means so amazingly to lengthen the very fractions of seconds. She felt that she had been dragged to the bed, a bodily distortion, and flung down, that nature might be allowed to repair her spent body sufficiently to permit of yet further agonies. The tragedy had wrung out every drop of her strength, as two giant hands should squeeze the water from a sponge.

The doctor had been bending over her when she had roused from her brief unconsciousness. He had quietly and with an impersonal tenderness made her more comfortable as she lay there, and had brought her a glass of water. Before her sense of responsibility had quite returned to her he went from the room for a few moments, and when he returned the key of the Other Door was with him. But by that time she had sat up, much to his displeasure, and to his command that she lie down again instantly simply repeated, "No, no; I must think—I must think!"

He forced her insistently with a hand on either shoulder. "You must let me think for you," he said.

"But Gregory will be here in a couple of hours!" she cried, forgetting his strangeness.

"Ah, that is better," said the doctor, drawing a chair to her side and sitting down in it, in the most friendly and reassuring manner. "You must tell me what you can so that I can help you. Who, now, to begin with, is coming?"

"Mr. Wayne——"

"The husband of madame, perhaps?"

"Her husband," said Cressida, and her eyes seemed to see through the two walls that separated them from the dead woman lying in the disorder of her bed.

"He is coming from——?"

"America—out West."

"A long way—a long way to come to find grief, mademoiselle. Most of us find it nearer us than that."

She turned her head on the pillows away from him. "Oh, don't—oh, don't!" she pleaded. Her heart flooded with a new suffering. "How

are we going to bring this sorrow down upon him—how can we tell him what he has come to find?"

"I will tell him," said the doctor, very gently, but wishing she would cry. "I will tell him as kindly as I can, never fear."

"But not—but not——" cried Cressida, her face coming back to him suddenly.

The doctor shook his head in acquiescence.

"No—not that—not, at any rate, just yet." He took a little box of bottles from his pocket, and gave her a small white tablet to swallow with some water. "You are sensible enough to realize that you have gone through a terrible ordeal and that you are now under a great strain, so spare yourself as much as you can, and I and my little bottles will do what we can to stand behind you. I am going out now—just for a very few moments; I have locked up the other room, and I want you to lie very still and let that little white tablet take care of you till I come back. Tell me if you have any friends you want me to send for?"

She shook her head mournfully. "I know nobody in Paris that I should care to see now. In fact, I have only one friend here, and he is a man."

"But he might be very useful—you need not see him if you don't want to—there will be messages and errands. Are there no despatches you want to send?"

"Ah, to my father!" She had quite forgotten him for the time, strangely enough, and he seemed very far away. Yet, of course, plans must be made for his joining her at once. "I don't know what to say."

The doctor nodded approvingly. "That's just it, and I don't want you to bother to decide. Let me put all that off on your good friend—isn't that what friends are for, mademoiselle? Give me his name——"

"Arlan Ben Witter——"

"Oh, Witter, I know him very well. You couldn't have had a better thought. He will spare you so much. He knows your father's name and

whereabouts—yes? That's right. I will send for him at once. And in ten minutes I shall be back again. Promise me you will lie still."

"I promise," she said wearily.

But an hour or so went by in the slow, terrible seconds before the physician returned to her. She lay there thinking dully—trying to contrive some means to keep the truth from Gregory, trying to invent some plausible story of a sudden inflammation of the lungs, a sudden stoppage of the heart, an overdose of some sleeping chloral. If she had realized last night the difficulty of standing between Sidney and self-revelation, she saw clearly now how by Sidney's own act her task had been made a hundred times more difficult. The fact that she had deliberately sought her own death immediately after receiving the despatch and the letter—it would indeed require an unassailable statement of situation and events to overpower that awful silent testimony. The doctor, too—would he help her? He was kindness itself, but would there not be questions of professional integrity which might make him refuse to be party to an untruth? But he must help her—he must. Let whoever else know the truth—it must be kept from Gregory that this poor dead woman had had any thought except of him, or any desire but to live.

Deliberately she shut her eyes to that phase of the question that touched upon the woman's honor. Deliberately she ignored that Sidney was witness against herself in how far the affair had gone. Deliberately she refused to allow herself to think that a harmless flirtation rarely results in suicide.

Besides the fact that she would not think evil of the dead woman, she had no time to waste in vain condemnations. Gregory would be here in an hour, and in so short a time they must prepare for him a false shelter from the truth, and one so stalwart as to defy the abiding enmity of time.

She was aroused by the return of the physician. Grave, but sympa-

thetic, he came to her side and touched her hands.

"That's very good," he said. "You have kept your promise very faithfully." He stood between her and the door, and yet her straining nerves were conscious of listeners beyond the threshold. "I am sorry to distress you further, but if I am to be of any help in this matter, you must take me fully into your confidence. Neither a doctor nor a lawyer nor a priest should be told anything but the whole truth, mademoiselle." He patted the hand he was holding very gently—and not with ill-timed encouragement. "You want me to help you, don't you?"

She answered with upturned, begging eyes.

"Very well, but what can I do for you in the dark? Let me ask you a few questions. Has Mrs. Wayne ever had any serious illness?"

Cressida shook her head. "The only thing I can think of to tell him is that her heart——"

"Ah, but we are not concerned now with what we are to tell him, but what you are to tell me," said the doctor quietly. "Had she ever been despondent or melancholy?"

"No," said Cressida.

"Had Mrs. Wayne been with you last evening?"

"No—she went out to dinner with friends."

"Ah, yes," the doctor nodded his head briefly. "She seemed in good spirits?"

"Why—just about as usual."

"Yes. Then had she seemed overwrought when she came in?"

Cressida waited a moment. "No, not overwrought. But perhaps excited a little, just with the good time and the good dinner and the champagne."

"Naturally enough," replied the doctor, again with his affirmative nod. "Then did she go to her room?"

"No. There was a letter for her which she had not read earlier in the evening, and a despatch which came while she was out."

"You gave them to her?"

"Yes."

"And how did she seem after she read them?"

The girl hunted about for an answer.

"Very deeply affected?" suggested the doctor, his head a bit to one side.

She nodded in silence.

"You had some conversation after that? How did she show herself to be?"

"Unreasonable—irrational."

"About what time was this?"

"About midnight, I should say," said Cressida vaguely.

"There seemed to be news in the despatch which was unwelcome?"

"I think—in her unnatural mood—yes," the girl admitted with some hesitation. She felt herself restricted in her replies by the unseen presence of those listeners at the door. She had read such grisly details in the newspapers—coroner, police, theory of suicide. But she had such faith in this man with the manner that seemed to give her courage just by its presence that she never doubted him so far as to ask that the dreadful affair be kept as much as possible from the press. Any unusual coming and going about the house would be attributed in the neighborhood to the death of Célestine's little boy, at least until Gregory came and plans had been determined upon.

"You separated then?" asked the physician, still keeping himself between her and the door.

"She went into her room and locked herself in. I sat up perhaps a half-hour, there in the parlor."

"Then you went to bed?"

"Yes."

"What happened later?"

"Nothing," said Cressida, shaking her head again. "I thought once I heard someone call my name, and it half woke me up, but I heard nothing more, so I went back to sleep again."

"What time did you get up?"

"Oh, very early. I woke about dawn, I think, and went out into the other room for a book. Then I heard someone crying downstairs."

There was a faint noise at the door.

"You heard someone crying downstairs?" repeated the doctor, in a louder voice than she had used.

"Yes—so I went down."

"Without knowing about——?"

"Yes. Her door was open then, and I was about to shut it so that I would not disturb her when I heard the sobbing, and as I guessed what had happened I went down to see if I could be of any use to Célestine or to Antoine."

"That was just before I came in?"

"Yes."

"Why did you get that big cup of black coffee to bring upstairs?"

Her eyes wondered up at him a little. "Antoine asked me to pour him a cup, and then asked me to have some. I should have drunk it down there had you not come in just then."

The doctor patted the hand he held again reassuringly. No one could doubt the accuracy of every word she spoke.

"Then when you came upstairs you went to Mrs. Wayne's door?"

"Yes, and she was lying on the bed."

"What then?"

"Why, I was frightened. I shook her and called to her, but she didn't wake."

Another faint sound at the door. "Why were you frightened?" asked the doctor promptly.

"I am not quite sure," said Cressida.

"There was a feeling in the air that something was wrong, and a faint, queer smell that I didn't recognize, and then she was lying there so oddly with half her clothes on."

"Certainly—it's quite natural. Then you called me?"

Cressida was silent a moment. "I am not quite sure," she said again. "You see, I was so bewildered. I think I called you before I tried to give her the coffee, but I am not sure. I called you twice, didn't I?"

"Yes, yes, you did."

"Well, I can't be exact about any thing after that. It all seems too confused, like a bad dream."

"Naturally—naturally. For the rest I can answer myself. There is

only one thing I want to ask—or perhaps two. Is your name Lucy?"

"My name is Cressida Predmore."

"Ah, yes. And now, Miss Predmore, what was it you took from madame's hand and put into your pocket?"

Clearly she didn't remember. With an uncertain look in her eyes she put her hand into the pocket of the gown she was wearing and drew out the gold case of the miniature, still threaded with the broken chain.

"Oh, her miniature——"

The doctor took it from her and opened it. It was noticeable that the light was so dim in her room that he had to take it into the parlor to examine it. When in a very few moments he returned he had it still in his hand.

"And now but one thing more," he said. He came to her side and dropped the case of the miniature into her pocket again idly. "I am going to the station to meet Monsieur Wayne. It will be better. There will be two shocks for him. You can understand that learning that a beloved person is dead is a very great shock, and that kind of news cannot, as a matter of fact, be robbed by any circumlocution of its terrible force. But seeing the dead body of a beloved person is quite another shock, and it is best that he should not have to endure the two together. Do you understand?"

Her ever dry eyes regarded him with a look of unselfish suffering. "I understand," she answered. "Oh, poor boy, poor boy!"

"But you see, if I am to recognize him, you must describe him to me very exactly. Is he a dark man?"

"Dark—no. His hair is light brown and his eyes are gray."

"Is he tall or short?"

"Oh, quite tall—six feet, I should say."

"Still, that is indefinite—there might be many men answering that description, from a train bringing people from England and America."

She was still keenly conscious of the listeners at the door as she haltingly

drew the picture of the man she loved. "Well, he is quite thin, although his bones are large. His cheek-bones are perhaps a little high, and he has a bright color. His face will be well tanned. He is smooth-shaven and probably he will wear a soft felt hat.

He walks like an animal, very swiftly, very easily, without any of the strut most civilized beings have been constrained to use." It displeased her that her mind at that moment should have gone to D'Erys and his dainty saunter. She did not wish to think of the man ever again so long as she would live, yet she could not help remarking as she described the person of Gregory Wayne how absolutely opposite were the types of the two men. But she had more important things on her mind than that.

"What are you going to tell him?" she asked, her brow contorted with her distress.

"What do you want me to tell him?" asked the physician, looking down at her.

A helpless look came over her. "I don't know—I hoped you would have decided. You must not tell him that she—that she took her own life! Oh, you must not."

"But if that is the truth?"

"Let me lie to him, then, if you won't," cried Cressida, sitting up in the bed. "I won't have him know—I forbid you to tell him! I would rather he thought that I myself had killed her."

There was an indefinable movement in the other room. The doctor glanced at the door, and went toward it. Then he returned to her, as before. "Lie down, mademoiselle. For the present let it rest. I will not tell him yet, at all events."

She caught at his arm. "But we must be agreed," she said. "I must know what you will tell him."

He almost smiled at her. Surely Eve herself had not more aptly learned the exigencies of lying. "I think we shall be justified in calling it failure of the heart, mademoiselle." There was a double meaning in his words that

brought color into her face. "You are aware, of course, that an investigation has been made—I had it done hurriedly so that it would be over before any other member of the family arrived. You and Antoine and the chemist and I have told our stories to ears that are quite satisfied."

"Antoine, the chemist, you and I!" she echoed. "I don't understand."

"I wrote the prescription, you see, last night for Antoine's little boy—and Antoine gave it to madame to get the medicine as she was going out."

"Going out—when?" asked Cresida amazedly.

"After you went to bed, mademoiselle. She went to the telephone."

"To telephone—" repeated the girl, with a sense of nausea.

"The chemist has told that she was very much upset. She went out like one half-witted, he said, carrying the bottle with her. I met her here on the steps and asked her for it, but she said she did not have it; that the chemist would send it around. You see, she had determined then to use it herself. I am glad"—he patted her shoulder as doctors will—"that we have so complete a chain of evidence. It saves you a great deal of annoyance, mademoiselle."

She was too absorbed in the thought of this new story to realize what he meant by this. She merely looked at him vaguely.

"Now, I want to go to the train, mademoiselle. Witter is very busy about your affairs. You have nothing to concern yourself with—nothing at all."

The words grated on her a little. Had she nothing to concern herself with, when here, within an hour, Gregory's hope, life, ambition, were to be swept away? She turned her head a little from the well-meaning blunderer, and he, believing the action to be an acquiescence, patted her shoulder again and went away.

Another hour went by while she lay there, and though her body, motionless, might rest, her mind was ever feverishly busy with her thoughts.

She had forgotten all about the miniature, until the doctor's questions had reminded her of its existence in her possession. She could not understand just what importance he attached to it, nor why he had asked her that odd question concerning her name. Why should he have thought her name might be Lucy? As she half sounded the syllables aloud the truth came to her—the memory of that occurrence that succeeding events had so obliterated from her mind.

All the details of that terrible moment when the dying woman—the almost already dead woman—had spoken, had moved her hand to link the word and the object together, came back to her. Sidney had forced herself back from the door of death to give her this message. There was no mistaking her meaning. Her last thought on earth had been that this token should go to Lucien D'Erys, her last word had been of him. Even her death itself, was not that a more eloquent message than any words could have conveyed to him—that she could not endure the return of this other man to whom she lawfully belonged! Yet not content with that supreme avowal, her poor worldly little mind had fastened an agony of importance upon the worldly token. What an unthinkable effort of dying mind and dying hand and dying lips that message must have cost her! Truly it may have cost her her life, for perhaps if she had not spent that spark of animation they had forced into her body upon that one word, they might perhaps have nursed the grain of fire into its old embracing glow.

She drew the miniature in its case from her pocket and looked at it almost aversively as it lay in her hand. Poor Sidney must have worn it round her neck the night before—she remembered her apprehension that the woman intended it as a gift to D'Erys. She had evidently dragged it off when she broke the chain—perhaps when she felt the first certainty of death. She may in her mental distress have forgotten all about it, until her hands in

their tortured wandering, groping for the hand that was to lead her away into forgetfulness, chanced upon it in her breast. Perhaps then she had thought to send it to D'Erys. Perhaps—who should ever know?—perhaps Cressida had indeed heard the voice call her name, that voice which woke her, and which she decided was only in her imagination. Poor Sidney—poor, pretty, blind woman! How childishly had she clung to the bit of glass and flung the jewel away!

Suddenly she sat up with a start, the blood stinging in her ears. The salon door had opened and closed. She sat rigid, listening to the murmur of men's voices. If it was Gregory, as indeed her pounding heart assured that it was, he would go into the Other Room. The wait seemed endless. Then she heard his footsteps, these unmistakable, cross the floor and enter the quiet room. Someone else—she felt sure it was not he—closed the door behind him.

For the first time the fear of breaking down caught her in a shaking fright. What if they made some stupid blunder in their lie; what if under the straight square look of those gray eyes her color should change guiltily and he should suspect she lied to him? Suppose by any accident, any hideous coincidence, any unforeseen situation badly handled, they should fail in their effort to shield this woman's memory, to shield Gregory Wayne from the bitter knowledge of the ugly truth? She felt cold and weak as the uncertainty of her ability to manage the affair successfully smote her, as on occasions of lesser importance stage-fright has tied the tongues and loosed the knees of older artists than she in the game of make-believe.

A hard lump seemed to grow in her throat till she could not swallow without pain. She felt her eyes growing wide, her face paling. She had had so little time to prepare a story—she had been so unable in what little time she had to think very clearly.

The doctor found her sitting so when he came to tell her that he thought she should go in to speak to Wayne.

She looked quite panic-stricken as the moment came down upon her, and the physician was unfeignedly sorry for her.

"Do not imagine it is going to be hard," he said gently. "The chances are he will ask you nothing. I have told him all the story that we agreed to tell him from your finding her this morning and our making an immediate but unsuccessful attempt to restore the action of the heart. He won't question it—what should he ask you, mademoiselle? Come, be of better courage. Go in and give him your hand—he needs your sympathy just now."

He helped her to her feet, and she instinctively went toward the mirror. She dropped the miniature back into her pocket. The doctor may have smiled at the grave way she smoothed her hair and pulled her room-gown about her throat—nobody was there to see him if he did indulge in this faint appreciation of the eternal feminine. He held the door open for her to pass out and gave her a kindly, encouraging nod.

"I am going to have some coffee sent in to you both from near-by," he said, as he took up his out-of-door things and went to one door of the salon as she slowly and fearfully crossed the room to another. Behind that Other Door were the two faces she wanted most to avoid.

He was standing at the side of the bed in which the woman had been laid, his hands loosely clasped before him, his eyes upon her face, although his head hung down. There were drops of water upon his forehead and about his mouth. But there was noticeably absent from his face the usual look of settled despair of the mourner. His eyes were horror-stricken, but his brows were eloquent of a strange perplexity. He seemed to be puzzling at a problem more personal than that universal enigma of life and death, and to be so deep in the pursuit of its secret answer that he did not hear Cressida enter, nor know that she was near him until she spoke.

"Gregory," she said softly.

He turned, unsurprised. Slowly his hands unclasped and he held them toward her.

"Cressida," he said tonelessly.

She took the hands and pressed them with a tenderness, a racking nervous pain breeding in her throat. He was so quiet, so stilled. She felt how blithely he had come toward this thing. But the interrogatory look, for a moment banished by her interruption, was returning again to his expressive face, and the feeling that he was about to question her frightened her, and she tried to withdraw her hands. Mutely the cold witness of their meeting lay in the white linen of the bed, defenseless.

But Gregory's hands closed firmly upon the hands he held as if he could thus compel the truth from her.

"What has she died of, Cressida?" he asked.

"What did the doctor say? Wasn't it heart failure?" She felt her heart begin to beat with apprehension. Was it possible after all that a lie could be told which would endure forever? In a kind of panic she felt the doubt of it.

"Sidney had a strong heart, Cressida."

She looked at him helplessly. "The doctor said it was heart failure, didn't he?" She could not think of anything else to say.

"Healthy women don't die of nothing," said the man, steadily ignoring her reference to the physician's diagnosis and holding her hands always in the cruelty of his strength.

"She did seem well," faltered the girl, well knowing he would have been advised of it had she been ailing. "But death does not always come slowly, Gregory. How many times we have heard of sudden, almost inexplicable ends. A friend of father's died standing at a wicket buying a railway ticket, with his money in his two hands, counting it."

He did not answer her at once, but his eyes continued to look fixedly down into her own, his insistent dis-

regard of all her words bringing a confusion into her manner that she, with a personal fury, tried to dispel. Without taking his eyes from hers, he took her by the shoulders.

"Look there, Cressida," he said. He turned her about until she faced the dressing-table.

There in the confusion of the dead woman's silver and crystal toilet service, her combs and pins and buckles and ribbons, tossed about in her careless way, lay a mass of crushed paper, closely written.

Cressida looked at it, flaying herself for her unforgivable negligence in forgetting to dispose of it, so long as he continued so to hold her. "I wrote that letter, Cressida," said Gregory Wayne, speaking over her shoulder. "It must have reached her yesterday. I sent her a despatch, too, saying I should arrive this morning. Did you know that, Cressida?"

"Yes, yes—of course."

He turned her about again and with a look into her face released her suddenly and stepped away. "I was coming to her, full of plans about the future. I had never been able to give her all the things she wanted, and in thinking so much of what she lacked she had grown to think of me, I know, less and less. I was so bound up in the prospects for getting what she wanted that I had little time to give to her. We grew very much apart." He flung up his head and looked squarely at Cressida. "Very much apart—did you know that?"

She shook her head, a sense of relief creeping over her at the opportunity to be truthful. "I had no idea of it," she said, thinking of his side of the matter.

"Do you mean, Cressida, to tell me that in all the weeks and weeks you have lived here together," his eyes went for a moment to the silent figure upon the bed, "you gained no impression that I was less to Sidney than I was in those days when we were all in New York together?"

She stumbled over her answer to this unexpected question. "But,

Gregory—how inevitable that is—it doesn't mean anything—one cannot expect the feverishness of that betrothal interest to last, can one? Doesn't it always cool down to a healthy normal temperature?"

He did not answer her this time either, but stood as if not listening to her words, yet regarding the manner of her reply with an intent curiosity. The pause lasted until he turned to look again at the crushed pile of closely written pages.

"These last few months of separation were agreed upon willingly by both of us. To the world it seemed merely that my work was taking me into regions uninhabitable as yet to the refined woman of a luxurious civilization, and that she was going to travel during my absence. The work I undertook to do was hard—nobody else had ever succeeded in it—but nothing could have been more welcome to me than just that exigent kind of occupation. I wanted to go away and forget everything else but my work. Cressida, if we had not separated then as we did, we should have separated later in a way the world would have made much noise about."

Truly he was amazing her now. She had almost forgotten the silent presence, before whom the story was being told, in her wonder at what he told her.

"But you see I have been successful in the thing I undertook to do. And it is going to make a rich man of me. It has brought me in close touch with the railroad interests that have been benefited by my work, and many, many opportunities to enrich myself stretch out before me." He took a few steps nearer to her. "I was proud of the work I had done, Cressida," he said. "Could you be proud of me?"

"Indeed, indeed I am," she said earnestly, again made easier by the opportunity to tell the truth. "I have thought of it so much, and hoped so eagerly for your success."

Again he paused, looking at her intently. Then, as before, his eyes wan-

dered back to the mass of crushed paper lying amid the disorder of the dressing-table. "It seemed to me, now that the first step was accomplished, now that nothing but the decay of my own brains could impede my progress toward the wealth she desired, it seemed to me that now was the time to make a new beginning, to start afresh under those auspices most favorable to her contentment, and to try to realize the old, long-abandoned hope of being happy together. It is all written there—you see how much there is." He gathered the crushed pages in one hand, held them up and let them fall.

They faced each other in a new silence. Then he took her hand and turned her slightly toward the bed. "I should have said, Cressida, the greater part of it is written there!" He pointed reverently toward the almost wholly shrouded figure of the dead woman. "She did not love me, Cressida! She couldn't face the thought of living with me. My God, she preferred to die rather than to see my face again!" He stopped her when she would have answered him. "Don't lie to me any more, dear little Cressida!" He almost smiled at her, but his mouth had begun to tremble. Suddenly he stumbled to his knees beside the bed, hiding his face. "I did not know it was as bad as this—Sidney, Sidney, why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you tell me you would rather die—I would so gladly—" She heard him sobbing in his hands, as it may be permitted a man to sob once in his life.

Cressida stood as motionless as an image in bronze, watching him. After a little she went closer to him and laid her hand gently upon his head. Although he doubted, they should not despair. False though the thing might be that they had determined he should believe, yet it would make his trouble easier to bear. And lie they must, until by very repetition, if need be, the story came to be established as a truth.

"Dear," she said, with more gentle-

ness than she would dare, under any other circumstances, let creep into her voice, "you are quite wrong. You charge yourself with having in your blindness goaded poor Sidney into taking her own life. And you are as wrong as it is possible for people to be in their first self-accusation of neglect and blindness in the face of death. Poor Sidney did not want to die—she was as glad as I was at the news in your letter, which she read aloud to me last night after we came in from dinner with some friends. I don't know how many plans she did not make for today and all days, and for the home-going, and for my visiting her next Spring. We sat up till long after midnight talking of it all—she was like a child on Christmas Eve."

Her eyes went from his bowed head to the white, cold face on the pillow, and she kept her eyes there as she spoke as if she defied the other to deny a word of it.

"We used to talk of you so much, and of what you were doing, and of the time when the world would be a bit of paper with your name written upon it. She had been lonely here, and restless, and if her letters were short and infrequent and contained but details of our life here in town, it was because she wanted you to feel easy about her. She wanted you to think she was more than content to stay here, because she did not want to hamper you out there with her exigent presence. We used to wonder what you were doing, and how in the world you could plan such marvelous things and carry them out so unflinchingly. She was so proud of you, Gregory. All the time she was thinking about you—as I can prove to you. She went to bed last night happier than I have ever seen her since her wedding day."

How could the face on the pillow lie so serene, so unchanging!

"And yet in the midst of her happy anticipation, the good God—" Cresida's voice faltered at the name—"was planning to take her away from us on the eve of your coming. But you must not say she did not love you.

Why, Gregory, she loved you with her whole heart!"

The lies seemed to burn on her lips, and she looked always at the stiff, white face upon the pillows as if she wondered at its silent acquiescence.

"She had been planning a surprise for you, Gregory—a gift. Ah, you see, my dear, how wrong you were! She had her miniature painted for you. We have been at it for more than a month. And she had a flat gold case made for it so that you might carry it about with you in one of your pockets. She pictured you receiving it out there and opening the package with considerable wonder as to what had been sent you, and your leaning over in the light of a battered tin lantern to look at the smile of love the likeness had brought across so many miles to you. The miniature came home only last night, and, when your letter came and the despatch, she thought of it and was so happy in thinking she might give it to you herself instead. She hung it about her own neck on a chain to keep it close for you. And last night, dear, when she was—dying—she pulled it off and gave it to me, and she tried to send you a message, too, but—she could not."

It seemed to her as if surely those waxen lids would uncloset to let the eyes look at her in the moment of this supreme falsehood. It made her heart leap with a guilty sense of sad gladness to think that those still hands could nevermore tear down the temple of his unbelief in her, his happiness, which, with stolen stones, she who loved him was rebuilding among the ruins. She took the locket from her dress and put it into his motionless hands. And as she bent so, after a brave hesitation she kissed the back of his head, on the heavy, boyish, blond hair. With the finish of her self-imposed labor her endurance came suddenly to an end, and blinded by a sudden agony of tears she found her way to the door, to her own room, and to the long-repressed relief from her own suffering.

VIII

THE succeeding days went by for her in those leaden, unprofitable hours that extend their dominion only in the house of death. It was as if Time in the aged personification stood at the door with a weed upon his scythe and his finger on his lip. Every sound that normally attends upon the life of men was hushed, subdued. Footsteps were mere ghosts of their former selves, voices were depressed, not quite to whispers, but to that dull monotone in which the sexton informs the pastor above him in the chancel that someone has requested the prayer for the sick.

And yet the number of footsteps, the number of murmuring voices, had so distastefully increased. As Cressida sat in her bedroom, her lounging-chair drawn into the windows, looking out in the eyes, looking in in the spirit, she was constantly aware of a coming and going, a grim, busy occupancy of the other rooms.

She thought, as she lay there in her chair, realizing in her great weariness the greatness of the travail she had endured, how sad it is that, whether by usage or by necessity, the death that comes to humans should have been so associated with ugliness and hideous proceedings. What a great pity that the material substance did not dissolve and vanish with the departure of the inner mystery, so when one died the lonelier one would look about the empty house and say, "Ah, the beloved has gone! Peace to that spirit on its long, strange journey," and find no pitiful, outworn body left behind to be hustled away and hidden in the ground. How strange that little mindless flowers should do so well what mortals do so badly! For how sweetly flowers go back into the world-dust whereof all things are made, and even the old leaf falling from the tree—what was it the famous Gascon lover said:

Que cette chute ait la grâce d'un vol.

There was something else he said as well, that was continually repeating itself in her mind like the mechanical prayer of a sleepy child:

Non, non, mon cher amour, je ne vous aimais pas!

On the last day of the stillness, of the murmuring voices, and the shuffling feet, Professor Predmore came. All that gentle tenderness which he had kept untouched by worldly custom, and yet for the most part always hidden by a strange superior indifference to worldly things, had come unveiled as if he pulled his reticence aside the better to see these tears. Cressida had never seen her father so. Keeping on the alert every instant to save Gregory, charging himself with all the arrangements for the return to America, finding women to pack, tactfully manipulating the concealment of all the dead woman's belongings, answering messages, and sending many, and, above all, standing with an authority poor Arlan Ben Witter could not arrogate unto himself between the family and the greedy and suspicious press, the usually befogged and cobwebbed student showed himself to no mean advantage.

Gregory and Cressida had not been face to face since that day at the bedside of his wife when she had silenced his clamorous suspicion and smothered the waking truth with a murderous lie. She had kept to herself, dreading to encounter him. But now that her father had come she felt as if it might be easier, as if somehow she could lean upon his presence as an invalid might lean upon his arm. But when upon the morning of this last day they did confront one another in their unwontedly somber attire she felt a lack in him of some expected emotion.

Strangely enough she felt his eyes following her in every movement that she made, and when unable to resist the involuntary recognition of his watchfulness she turned her face to his, always she surprised upon it a look of perplexity, of abysmal uncertainties, of deep-seated trouble.

When the poor dead woman was about to be carried out to her last lodging Cressida went to her side and stood so, looking down into the white, unnaturally rigid face. It seemed in-

credible she really could be dead. Cressida could almost see the laces on her stony breast move with a sigh, could almost persuade herself the white, white eyelids fluttered and would presently unclose. They had brought back that detached soul once, she and the doctor. What if it should suddenly of its own accord return?

But the unbelievable stillness of the deserted body obtained. Sidney was gone away, indeed, indeed!

She looked up to find Gregory standing opposite her. On his face there showed the same sadness, the same perplexity.

"Cressida," he said.

She moved her lips to answer but there was no sound. "Cressida, do you believe that there can be between the living and the dead understanding and forgiveness?"

She hesitated. "I don't know, dear Gregory, what I believe," she said at last.

He looked at her a moment and then nodded. "Yet if there should be," he said slowly, "pray that it may exist between this woman and myself."

She looked at him, startled, but he offered no explanation. Still with the look of perplexity upon him, he stood looking down at the dead face among the living roses.

There was a rather long ride in the raw, cold early Winter day, under a dull sky. The ground, they said, was very hard—it seemed a surviving idea of the dark ages that they should plan to lay poor Sidney in such unfriendly bedding. There was the usual mechanical obedience to the practiced directions of the *entrepreneur des pompes funèbres*.

But at last the woman's body was as invisible as her own soul, and where she had been wont to walk there was an empty space. Cressida only had cried—the sound of the falling earth had startled her into a sob. But Gregory had stonily looked on, always with the wrinkles of perplexity upon his forehead.

At the house poor Antoine asked to speak to Cressida. Since the little

baby had been taken away by pitiful hands and Célestine had gone to her sister's for a time, he had been left alone. He had wandered about wholly unnoticed by these people with their grief upstairs, and from his shadowed corner he had seen depart the second victim from his house of the unending silent war.

Cressida, as her father and Gregory passed her, went nearer to Antoine and lifted her questioning eyes. "You want to speak to me?" she said.

Antoine nodded, but kept his eyes upon the figures slowly mounting the stairs. He waited obviously until they were out of earshot and then turned to her with an air of discharging a disagreeable duty at the earliest moment possible.

"Monsieur D'Erys—" he began, when Cressida stopped him.

"Antoine—I don't like the name. Don't let us speak of him."

"But, mademoiselle, I promised—" She turned back, biting her pale lips—"Shortly, then," she said.

"As short as I can work it, mademoiselle. The servant of monsieur comes with a message. Monsieur has left town—gone to the Riviera—no, that is not the message. That explains, I suppose, why someone else has to bring it. The message is about a picture, mademoiselle."

"A picture, Antoine?"

"Well, a small portrait. Monsieur D'Erys is desolated, but the picture belongs to him, and——"

"C'est assez, Antoine!"

The man stopped promptly. There was a short silence. Then Cressida made for the stairs. "Tell the servant of Monsieur D'Erys that the miniature is in safe-keeping," she said, "and speak of it to no one else."

The night came and passed, and almost before Cressida could realize that she had left the little apartment with the good Antoine weeping on the steps she was waving good-bye to France, and more especially to Arlan Ben Witter as he stood on the ship's dock watching the ocean liner swing out into her onward course.

With the throb of the great ship under her like the living breath of a leviathan, she turned her face to the touch of the wind. It seemed like a welcoming caress from the old abandoned life, like a beckoning to return again to the things that were better than these. She felt a distinct assurance and inspiration in the breath of living air, as if it had really come to her from that shore that lay every hour more near.

That evening, leaving her father to his book, she put her greatcoat on and went to stand in the very prow of the ship where the feeling of this was strongest. She was heavy-hearted—for the mere humanness of her cried out against the injustice of the fate she had devised for herself. She found no balm in those hours of rebellion, in the thought that Gregory would always live, thanks to her, in his fool's paradise. She had expected somehow that that would make all the rest easy for her. But she found to her self-contempt that she was suffering a very great deal for the want of a little recognition of what she had forsworn, a little encouragement to the bearing of this load which was another woman's secret. The thought occurred to her that she would tell her father, but she put it away from her as a mean weakness. If what she had done was right she need not ask for admiration, too.

The cold wind flapped the cape of her coat like the wing of a great bird, and, as if with light fingers, loosed a bit of her hair and let it stream in the light of the forward lamp with its unmetallic burnish brilliant against the night sky.

Eloquent of its own depth and vastness the black sea boiled and foamed into white against the sharp prow, and the subdued churn-churn of the great ship's strokes seemed to pitch them forward upon it with rhythmic lunges. Clear cut in the forward light against the night sky shone her beautiful fine face and her strong bronze hair.

Gregory Wayne stood looking at her from a little distance for some time before he came forward and took his place beside her at the rail. People

passed in groups and singly behind them, some loitering, some with the energetic step of the bore taking his much talked of constitutional.

"Looking toward the land of promise, Cressida?" he said gently.

Perhaps she nodded—she could not say. His nearness in that solitary place, the dear sound of his voice brought down upon her that intolerable grievous happiness that cannot be explained to any but lovers and need not be explained to them.

"We are leaving a great deal behind us, Cressida. We are beginning all over again on some things."

The bigness of him as he leaned beside her filled her with terror and delight. She was not the one to mask from herself that she loved him. But when he was near her she was terrified to think how easily she might show herself unmasked to others.

"Do you know how I feel, Cressida?" It seemed to please him to say her name as often as he might. "I feel as a man might who had contracted a very great debt, and who always had it like a shadow between him and the future—and who suddenly had it lifted from him in an hour, cruelly, harshly, impetuously, but lifted nevertheless, lifted and thrown far back along the old path where he would nevermore encounter it."

She did not understand and she turned her face a very little so that she could see him by the extremity of her eye.

"Cressida, Cressida, Cressida," he said, each name more softly spoken than the last, "how wonderfully the captain drives the ship, although we can see no further than the next wave."

Her cape flew open and caught him by the shoulder as with a friendly hand. He lifted the corner from him and wrapped it about her again. "Cressida, Cressida!" he said.

The wind blew about them, swinging the strands of her red hair childishly. He watched it now and then glowing in the forward light and once he moved his hand at it as if he wanted to touch

it. "Cressida," he said again, "a slave can be made to work well?"

She wondered a little. "I never saw a slave," she said. "They say a slave works well, but for what cause is sometimes doubtful."

"How does a freeman work—Cressida?"

She looked at him again from the edge of her fine, beautiful face. "Freemen work well, they say, too, but perhaps for better reasons than the slaves."

"To whom now do you think a slave could be most grateful?"

"To a kind master."

"Ah! And what would be the procedure of a kind master?" She could not understand why he should give such worthless questions so much weight.

"To give him freedom?" she suggested, idly except for wonder at the question.

"Yes, Cressida, to give him freedom."

He stood a moment looking straight before him into the darkness, his uncompromising eyes as level as the scales of justice. But he seemed, unlike herself, to see the pageant of the past spread there before him on the unclenched curtain of the night. Under their feet throbbed the great colporteur laboring up the hill of the earth.

Then deliberately he turned to her. "You have given me freedom, Cressida," he said.

She stared at him. The wandering bit of red hair crossing the eyes that would see him better was caught aside and held in one hand while she stared at him.

"You have given me my freedom, with your own faithful hand," he said again, and he took it as it hung helplessly at her side and looked at it in the light of the forward lantern as if he could scarcely believe it could have held so great a gift.

Still she stared at him uncomprehendingly. "I might have gone back to the work I have to do, with the chains of a slave on me; the heavy, heavy chains of self-reproach, of culpa-

bility. But you have set me free and sent me back in the unfettered strength that knows no weakness."

"I don't know what you mean," she said at last.

He held fast to the hand an instant, looking down into her bewildered, unconscious face. Then, as in explanation, though without taking his eyes from hers, his free hand sought about in his coat, found something, drew it forth, and bringing his two hands together closed her own palm on what he held:

She did not understand, but she saw his face alternately quivering and rigid. She felt the familiar case of the miniature in her fingers and knew it even before she looked down at it for confirmation of her belief. The flat, dull gold shone quietly in the light of the forward lantern.

"I don't know what you mean," she said again. "What is this?"

"My liberty," he said, so softly that she scarcely heard him. Under their feet the trembling ship lunged into the dark sea ahead. People in groups and singly passed now and then.

For no reason except that perhaps his silence seemed to expect it, or because she knew of no enlightenment to be gained at any rate from the outer case, though there be no more within, she half-absently pulled the case open and looked down at it. If the great ship had suddenly ceased to thrill and throb, and had slowly sailed upward instead of forward, she could have experienced no more stupefied amazement. In the light of the forward lantern and from the frame of the dull gold case the brown, smiling face of Lucien D'Erys looked up at her.

Frozen as she was by the dreadful unexpectedness of that face, she was conscious that her strained intellect was blindly struggling to achieve a new series of lies. But with the first revulsion she realized how impossible this was. She had put this into his own hand; she had told him that the woman had taken it from her breast in her last moment of life. In the wave of this testimony all the edifice

of lies she had so carefully constructed was swept away. She could not understand how she had kept the miniature so long in her possession—had held it in her hand and never opened it to discover this in time. How unbelievable that she should never have suspected that Arlan Ben Witter had done them both to be exchanged!

Gregory Wayne took the miniature from her with the tips of his fingers. Without even closing it he dropped it over the side of the ship. It seemed to vanish in the air, being unseen and

unheard in the boiling white rapids about the prow.

Horror and pity stamped upon her face, she continued to stare at him—at his face that alternately quivered and was rigid. But after a bit he took her gently by the shoulder and turned her about to face the wind that seemed to come like a welcoming, beckoning touch from the land that every hour lay more near. He pointed ahead into the darkness.

"Look at the future, Cressida," he said.



THE WAIL OF A WAITRESS

By Ethel M. Kelley

A IN'T it a shame that life should jar us so?
 Why, come to think, there ain't a girl I know
 That don't have somethin' pretty tough to bear,
 It ain't so strange that they get not to care—
 They'd all stay straight if they had half a show.

Now there is Lou that's taken up with Joe,
 Though she likes Tom the best—that was too slow—
 An' yet them two made such a pretty pair—
 Ain't it a shame?

No one has what they want, it seems as though,
 Thinkin' of times not very long ago
 That was so sweet—it don't seem hardly fair.
 Sometimes I wonder if *he* ain't somewhere,
 Sayin', as I say when my mind gets low,
 "Ain't it a shame?"



THE ATTRACTION

MRS. HOLT—He seems to take great pleasure in his automobile.
 MRS. HARTE—No wonder, dear. His wife is afraid to venture out in one.

BEYOND THE SPECTRUM

By John G. Neihardt

FOR several years I have been debating with myself as to the advisability of doing that to which at last I have set my hand. Friendship is sacred; but it has seemed to me that there may be certain situations which so far transcend in importance any matters of human relationship that he who holds the key finds his debt to all mankind far greater than his sacred obligations to a dead friend.

But is Frank Steel dead? I shall not attempt to answer this question which forces itself upon me with hideous insistence in my waking hours and even in the sleep of night; for I confess that the key which I hold is a broken thing, incapable of opening the locks of the Infinite. But as from those age-scarred fragments of stone a portion of the ancient glory has been rebuilt, so from the broken key which I now present some ingenious dreamer may sometime be able to give us at least a faint conception of the workings of the Lock.

In the Fall of — my friend Steel had expressed his intention of "becoming invisible for an indefinite period," as he put it; and from that time until the April of the following year I had not the least idea of his whereabouts, although I fancied that he had betaken himself to some hidden corner of the world for the purpose of elaborating in solitude some unique conceit.

Steel was a young man, and bore the unmistakable characteristics of a rare genius, which, owing partly to his peculiar reserve and partly to the extreme grotesqueness of his thoughts, had become known to only a few select

spirits. As for me, I had been his companion from his earliest youth; at least as much so as any human being of my rather matter-of-fact disposition could have been.

All through the last Winter of his life—or *was* it the last?—I had wondered much about my friend; and my anxiety for his welfare, knowing as I did the dangers of so unusual a temperament as his, was only in a small measure offset by my firm belief in the work of rare beauty which would doubtless be the result of his Winter's meditation.

Imagine my joy when in the latter part of April I received an envelope addressed to me in the handwriting of my friend. The postmark was one of those modest, self-effaced affairs, denoting a town of no importance, a comatose village painfully conscious of its insignificance and quick only with meek apology. My friend was somewhere in the most lonesome regions of the Black Hills.

I said that I felt joy at the receipt of this letter; but no sooner had I torn the envelope and taken a hasty glance at the whole page within than I felt a sudden depression of spirits that, upon closer scrutiny of the page, increased to a strange dread. For the chirography of my friend had been remarkable for a firm stroke, as bold as his adventurous spirit, and the writing before me had changed somehow. To be sure, there was still about it that imperial atmosphere, as I might term it, which still gave me, as of old, the sensation of having seen a vivid flash of purple light; but something else was manifest

in a scarcely perceptible quivering of line and an unusual thinness of the final strokes.

This is a copy of the rather abrupt note:

DEAR REYNOLDS: I have living with me at present a white cat—most unusual creature—yea, more than a cat! Come at once while same still *consents to dwell in the spectrum!* Be at — (here the self-effaced village is named) on May 10th. Follow the Chinaman.

FRANK.

Now, Steel was one of those rare human creatures whose wishes might be termed a dynamic force. This is one of that order of facts against which only the intensely ignorant can produce argument. Knowing Steel as I did, even so common a thing as a white cat took on for me a weird and compelling significance; and in that inevitable self-conscious mood that follows upon the heels of sudden enthusiasm I laughed at myself. Nevertheless, I made the necessary preparations for the journey, and on May 10th I alighted at the wretched little Black Hills village.

It was already late evening. A drab light with an ever-decreasing power of illumination filtered through the melancholy air that oozed with rain, though yet no rain had fallen. I looked about feeling a vague sense of dread, which was but little relieved by the grinning face of the Chinaman whom I at once discovered standing at one end of the platform holding by the bits two ponies. The Oriental face and the odd appearance of the ponies, whose tousled Winter coats had not yet been shed, added much to the grotesquerie of a journey begun through a seemingly silly whim exalted by some inexplicable psychic force into a matter of the gravest importance.

Having assured myself that one of the ponies was for me, we mounted, the Chinaman setting out at a brisk trot and I following. As we proceeded, the oozing twilight deepened into an eerie haze through which I saw indistinctly a landscape that has, since the happenings which I shall relate, taken on in my memory the aspect of a land seen in a quinic delirium. But at the time I was not entirely conscious of the photo-

graphic accuracy of the picture which was being impinged upon that sensitive plate, the subconscious mind.

About the scarp of a cliff the road ran in tortuous gyrations. Around us in the mist wild crags and fog-swathed summits reared themselves aloft—huge, impalpable shadows, hurled upward as from some subterranean phosphoric illumination. Upon the rocky trail the ponies' hoofs awoke a sullen muffled throbbing, perceptible more as a feeling than a sound; and the immediate space about us seemed as a winged island that should have left us groping in its wake of fog but for a headlong speed that kept us in its narrow confines. Like tapering columns of spectral smoke from innumerable hidden witches' fires, the pine-trees revealed themselves in faded chiaroscuro.

By imperceptible degrees the whole passed into a dull monochrome, a melancholy madness of gray, and a rain began to fall. At first it came as a confusion of many ghostly whispers, the inarticulate complaining of an exhausted grief; then a sighing grew up out of the silence, and a dull wind moaned about the many-folded ragged mantle of the fog. The rain increased, and the wind dragged it across my face as with innumerable soft mops. It seemed to me a ceaseless thing; something coeval with Nature; a melancholy fact, primal and ultimate.

Reaching a space where the trail widened, I spurred my pony and drew up beside my guide. My knee touched his, and I felt then, more than I had ever felt before, the essential kinship of men; for this region was grotesque and utterly ultra-human, pressing upon me, as never before, the pitifully incidental importance of man. We seemed as phantasms moving in a mist, and this was my brother.

Wishing to cast off the feeling of dread—a visible emanation of which the fog seemed to be—I ventured a few questions as to my friend's habits. The man shook his head and kept silence. I had hoped to see a human light in his face; but instead I saw only

an ugly mask, dull, and expressive only of some vague fear—a reproduction of the eternal gray melancholy fact about us.

"I hear he has a white cat," I remarked, with a final desperate effort to throw off the clinging dread. The man straightened his body with a spasmodic thrusting of his hands against the pommel. Peering through the murky gloom under the dripping rim of his hat, I saw a pallor flash across his face and die.

"Well, what about the cat?" I snapped, half-angrily.

The man rocked himself uneasily in the saddle, and with a perplexed shaking of the head he spurred his pony up the trail.

Like the black shadow of something huge and irresistible moving in the oozing air, the dark bore down upon us. It seemed as the heralding projection of a calamity that should be swift and crushing. With a series of preliminary gusts the wind felt round the gloom as with the tentative thrusting of powerful, slimy tentacles that meant at length to conquer.

Then suddenly—like the first stroke of the catastrophe—a vivid streak of purple fire, a writhing sword-blade coruscant with the fires of hell, leaped from the scabbard of the Night! Once, twice, thrice the blinding stroke descended! It slit the inky mantle of the mist, revealing in the more than noonday brilliance of its flame the sinister naked bodies of the crags! And from beneath the inward rushing of the murky flood that followed hoarse roars of giant pain surged up and died in chaos.

Faster and faster we took the trail ahead, the nose of my terrified pony clinging tenaciously to the tail of its galloping companion. Great grotesque night-dogs barked incessantly at our heels. Spiteful spirits struck me in the face with slimy whips. I caught myself clinging to the pommel and shouting, "Damn the white cat!" Over and over I shouted the words with little care as to the order of them. They seemed somehow a part of the

dread eternal fact that whipped my face with snake-like ropes of water, and yelled at my back, and smote the howling Night with burning, ghastly wounds.

But at length, lifting my eyes with no hope of seeing aught, I was aware of an upright rectangle of steady light ahead of me. It was the open door of a cabin, and at once the figure of my friend grew up in sharp silhouette in the midst of it.

I leaped from my pony and, giving the reins to my guide, hurried to the door. As I approached, a white cat leaped from the shoulder of my friend where it had been perched, and disappeared.

It seemed to me that the greeting I received was hardly commensurate with the manner of my arrival. In a perfectly matter-of-fact way, as though he had parted from me but the moment before, Steel led me into a dingy room almost bare of furniture and offered me a seat in front of a fire that burned cheerily in a rude open grate.

"But, Frank," I said, "I'm wet to the skin and deuced uncomfortable!"

"It is quite probable that I shall be very busy tonight," replied my friend; "so be careful to make yourself comfortable. Your bed is in the next room. Tolerable tobacco on the shelf. John will see to your supper. Rather above ordinary courtesies tonight, old man, as you see."

With that Steel left me, entering a room to my left, and locking the door behind him. I set about to make myself comfortable, as I had been bid, and very soon John, the Chinaman, came in and set me out a very good supper.

So accustomed had I become to the occasional oddity of my friend's bearing that I was not at all offended with his seeming coldness; for many times had I proved the warmth and manliness of his nature. But I was worried about a change in his facial expression. There was a transparent look about his features and the eyes were over-serious. Settling myself comfortably before the fire I thought over the whole

affair, and went to bed with a feeling that my sense of dread and the weirdness of the night and the changed expression of my friend's face bore some cryptic import. Also I thought of the cat and the momentary terror I had seen in the face of John.

II

My sleep was not the sleep of rest. It was rather to be described as a state of narcotized intellect and stimulated imagination. The mountain storm without invaded the thin upper air of sleep and was no longer a strife of physical forces, but a psychic cataclysm. At times the dream thunders took on the sound of exaggerated purring, howls of feline rage, and died off down the infinite mist-mantled valleys of sleep like the sullen goblin moaning of a mad and crouching cat. And now the chaos of the fog developed feline forms. Huge, milk-white panthers fought with lions white as snow, and the flashing of their eyes was lightning. Sinuous forms of terrible beauty, whirlwinds visible they seemed! And then like a flood of impalpable soot the night rushed down, and knives of rapid fire rent the gloom with hideous gashes that dripped with bloody flame, and closed and opened and closed. And after ages of darkness and flame and sound, a golden glow grew up that seemed more a blowing of melodious horns than a light. And I awoke; the quiet mountain dawn was in the room.

I dressed hastily, and seeing no signs of life about the place, went out. The cabin, built of pine logs and much more commodious than I had thought it to be, sat upon a knoll overlooking a panoramic landscape, lyric in its riot of light and shade and epic in its vastness. The early sunlight, falling aslant across a bald summit reared in severe grandeur against the rain-washed sky, dipped the tops of the taller pines in liquid gold. A diaphanous purple mist flowed down the long ravines and turned the quiet valleys into strange, enchanted lakes. No trace of

the tempest of the night was there—only an Olympian calm through which a miraculous blending of light and shade raised up a visual hymn of peace. Somewhere far off swift waters leaped and laughed and smote thin bells of joy among the gulches hidden by the pines. The subtle wine of Spring ran sparkling through the thin, crisp air.

Finding a narrow trail that led upward among the crags, I set out leisurely for the sun-smitten summit. Absorbing the youthful vigor of the time and place with all five senses, I was suddenly aware that the inexplicable dread that had clung about me since the receipt of Steel's letter had all but passed away. I smiled as I thought of it. But why should I have felt it at all? I have always been blessed with a sunny temperament, and my health was perfect. Why, then, should I have felt a strange sinking of the heart at the sight of the letter? Could not a slight change in a man's penmanship have been the result of any one of innumerable trivial causes? A slight coldness of the hands, an over-indulgence in tobacco? Even though it were due to close confinement at study—what of that?

But why had I, who am ordinarily phlegmatic in temperament, been so thoroughly terror-stricken by an ordinary fog followed by an ordinary thunderstorm? And the face of my friend—had I seen any material change in it? And the cat—ah, the cat! Had not the Chinaman's face clearly expressed fear at the mention of the cat? Or was that also a fancy of mine? Or—the thought struck me with peculiar force—could my brain have received some psychic impulse from the brain of Steel itself, that filled me with foreboding and gave to every thought an uncanny significance?

Thus occupied with introspection, I was suddenly aware of Steel beside me.

"Quite a color-scheme, is it not, Reynolds?" said he cheerily.

I looked into his face and felt a shock at what I thought I saw: an unutterable weariness of the large blue

eyes, as though they had gazed too long into great distances; a translucent appearance of the skin; deep horizontal lines in the forehead, and the least hint of shadows in the cheeks. He seemed as one who had passed a night of debauchery; and yet—this was not the result of a debauch of the flesh.

"Indeed a marvelous picture," I replied, still scrutinizing his face. "I can scarcely believe that this was only last night the scene of a perfectly hellish tempest."

"Was there a storm?" asked Steel dreamily.

"A storm? Where in the world were you, man?"

"A storm is merely a physical phenomenon, is it not?" he replied; and he added hastily, "What are you seeing in my face?"

"Unspeakable weariness, Steel! You've got to get out of this."

"Do you know why you see that in my face, Reynolds?" he asked; "because it's there! Anybody could see it! And as for getting out of *this*"—he indicated the vast panorama with a sweep of the arm—"I *shall* soon, perhaps; very soon, perhaps!"

The voice of my friend was soft and even more musical than I had ever known it before. There was in it not the least suggestion of the cynic, not a single note of harshness. Doubtless, one who was not acquainted with the essentially poetic nature of Steel would have thought of incipient insanity. So far as I could discern, there was absolutely no trace of it.

We strolled on side by side in silence, and reached at last the summit smitten into gold with the slant morning. We sat down upon a boulder to rest, and I had drawn my friend's attention to the purple and gold that rimmed the far horizon, when he produced a glass prism from his pocket.

"You are still seeing with your eyes, I perceive," said he: "a very wretched habit to fall into, I am sure! Look!" He turned his back to the sunlight and smoothed the skirt of his coat across his knee. Holding the prism in the sunlight he cast the seven prismatic

colors upon the shadowed cloth. "Do you know what you are seeing here on my knee?"

"The seven colors of the spectrum—the primary colors," I answered, a little piqued, I confess.

"The world in epitome!" he said, with an air of one who corrects a child. "You are looking upon the naked truth about a thing in which and for which you toil and sweat and suffer! Look upon it carefully! There it is—the whole monotonous and inconsequential scheme of life in the flesh! Believe me, the eye is an imperfect instrument capable of receiving only those vibrations which blind it! But to proceed"—Steel was now seemingly unconscious of my presence and had the manner of one rehearsing a speech—"to proceed. Man is a creature of illusion existing between a violet ray and a red one. Time is an illusion caused by the contiguity of seven visible rays which, viewed together, produce a sensation of change. But so perfect is the illusion to man that we may, speaking in his language, define Time as being that portion of motionless eternity which falls within the narrow confines of the spectrum. Violet upon one hand and red upon the other, man is a prisoner reveling in the illusions of his prisons.

"Born in the violet—the ray of germination—he passes in turn under the influences of the indigo, the blue, the green, the yellow, the orange, and is snuffed out in the tempestuous vibrations of the red. His life, as he terms it, is a color-scheme, the combinations of which are controlled by Chance or Fate or God, just as you wish to put it. Health is merely a perfect blending of complementary colors, and disease is merely a combination of colors that cannot vibrate in unison.

"Now it has been demonstrated, even by physical methods, that beyond the violet and the red are other rays. Beyond the violet, the invisible rays that foster germination; and it has been demonstrated that these are most in evidence in the Spring

months. Beyond the red are the invisible rays that foster growth; and these are more in evidence in the Summer months. Do you catch the significance of this—the wonderful, illuminating significance? The red, last of the visible rays, lies next to the invisible rays of growth. Death is a mere passing through the red ray into the ray of growth. There is no dying; there is only a passing out of the spectrum into infinite development!

"We are souls passing through a motionless, colorless eternity, and it is only in the path of the seven rays, here cast upon my knee, that we become visible, like particles of dust floating athwart a sun-ray in a dark-room!

"Co-existent with the seven visible vibrations are the audible vibrations—eleven or twelve octaves of them. Beyond these, what? The inaudible vibrations of the Infinite!

"Now, the ear is an imperfect instrument capable of receiving only those vibrations which deafen it!"

Here I broke in upon the volubility of my friend. "What in thunder are you driving at, Steel?" said I, for, as I have stated, I am a most matter-of-fact individual. "When are you going to laugh and put up that prism? To be strictly scientific, there is at present in my interior inwardness a kaleidoscopic process incident to a lamentable intertanglement of invisible rays, which bids fair to send me ramping through the visible red into the regions of infinite development before I have even finished with the violet, which, as you well know, it having been demonstrated, is entrusted with the delicate process of germination. To speak in vulgar terms, commonly used by the laity, I'm hungry and I want my breakfast!"

It was my intention to arouse the sense of the ridiculous in my friend, well knowing that nothing is so healthful as an occasional laugh at one's own vagaries. I confess that my attempt at facetiousness was but a melancholy affair, but is it not the duty of a friend to laugh at the intention even though the joke be flat?

Anxiously I scrutinized his face for the least glimmer of light that should proclaim his sense of humor still alive. But a shuddering passed through my limbs as I gazed into his face, as though I had unwittingly laid my hands upon a corpse in the dark.

With the same intense seriousness, he waited until I had ceased speaking, and when my melancholy effort at good-natured laughter had been made he proceeded rapidly; and never have I heard a more musical voice than was his.

"We are like shipwrecked wretches huddled on an infinitesimal point of land in an infinite sea. Faintly we catch the thunderous music of the reefs. We stare hard into an impenetrable fog and our hearts grow sick. We cannot see beyond the narrow limits of the sea-girt speck of earth. And some of us go mad. Think of it, Reynolds! A little patch of tense skin is all we have with which to catch the grand musical utterances of the outer sea. Another little patch of skin on which to catch the beauties of the Infinite. Poor heartsick slaves of the Spectrum and the Gamut are we!

"But listen! What if we should find within that portion of us which is the child of the Infinite a latent sense not limited to a certain number of vibrations per second? What if we should discover an inner eye, the eye of Psyche—an inner ear, the ear of Psyche? What would we see? What would we hear? Less than an octave of color, less than twelve octaves of sound? Ah, my friend, then there would be for us the mad glad twinkle of the romping Satyr's hoofs in every woodland shadow! In every silver stream the beauteous naked bodies of the Nymphs would be revealed, diaphanous and splendid with gems of dew! We would see the saucy Echo flitting through the purple shadows of the gulches and peeping coyly 'round the stern gray crags! For us no longer the pages of the poets, and Homer's songs would be forgot. For we ourselves could stand in dread-hushed Aulis and feel the ominous silence of the windless sea! We could

see the idle sails drooped listlessly as from some awful sickness of the heart! We could see the altar and the fearsome huddled faces of the Argive host! We could hear the shrieks of Iphigenia piercing the tragic silence even as the knife had pierced her virgin breast; and in the dread hush of eternity would grow up the ceaseless dripping of her blood! We could see the mighty Achilles lying sullen in his tent; and 'round the visible walls of Troy would fly for us the pitiless charioteer trailing in the dust the body of the fallen Hector! Before our eyes Cambyzes's futile unreturning host would march into the deserts of the West and round the huddled legions we could see the awful pillars of the sand reared skyward in the whirlwind! The flood of nations driven northward by the breath of Xerxes's pride would roll before us! Or lured by kinder scenes, we could stand unseen among Thessalian meadows and hear the tender words of Lais and her boy. Or with the ancient jury we could feel the overpowering beauty of the breasts of Phryne.

"Helen would walk before us, changeless, even as she walked for Paris; and for us would be the maddening allurements of that face 'that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium'! We could know the songs the sirens sang! Through the sullen days of August we could read upon the golden face of the sunflower by the dusty road a more than Homeric epic! And in the quiet nights of moon and star when winds were lulled with perfumes, we could hear the passionate lyric of the crimson rose!"

At this point in his impassioned outburst Steel drew out his watch and stared blinking for a moment upon its dial.

"Ah," said he at length, "breakfast is doubtless cold by this time!"

III

"At least," said I, as we sat down to the rude table, "we can perfectly agree as to the reality of hunger. That is also an illusion, is it not?"

For a moment I had hopes of awakening the old self that I still believed to be sleeping in my friend. For a moment, I say; for there was the least glimmer of the light of old times in his eyes.

But just then the cat came!

The light died. The face of Steel suddenly took on a deeper seriousness, an almost worshipful aspect, as the white puss entered the room with a majestic stride, leaped upon a high-chair and sat up with an air of regal dignity that, at any other time, would certainly have seemed ridiculous. But somehow laughter in this strange world, which I had lately entered, died on the lips or perished in a throaty cackle.

In the oppressive hush that fell the Chinese servant entered and to my surprise, leaning over the cat said gravely: "Will madame have an omelet?"

I must confess that as I stared upon the mock scene I actually listened for the answer of a human voice! I am not, I think, given to hallucinations; but in that strange moment I seemed to see *through* the white cat, as though I were gazing into a great distance at the end of which the vague outlines of a most charming woman appeared. The hallucination—or was it such?—was accompanied by a momentary giddiness which I cannot explain; and then I heard a soft *meow*, and I was again staring upon a most ridiculously grave cat and a most ridiculously obsequious servant.

When we had all three been served I was aware that my hunger was indeed no longer a reality. I trifled with my omelet, dawdled with my coffee and broke my toast into innumerable pieces. Steel, however, gave evidence of a very good appetite; and this fact in a measure reassured me as to his mental condition, for I have read, having had no personal experience to guide me, that mania is very often accompanied by a loss of appetite.

Throughout the meal, which progressed in the most profound silence, my friend was ever on the alert to anticipate the wants of my feline hostess, and more than once I fancied that I

saw creeping across his face the unmistakable light of love.

As I look back over all the meals that I have eaten, I am forced to single out that breakfast as the most tedious, though certainly the most significant of them all. I say "significant," for in a sense it was so, but with a vague and bewildering significance. At length it came to an end in a manner which should have been ridiculous, but, for some subtle reason, was not.

The white cat, having finished her meal, gave forth a series of purring sounds. Strangely enough, it seemed to me that this was no ordinary purring, but a sort of exquisitely musical speech the meaning of which flashed rapidly through my poor befogged brain only to be forgotten immediately. Such speech the reader may have heard in the delirium of malarial fever. Exquisitely musical, delightfully caressing it seemed; and as I watched and listened I experienced a momentary hallucination similar to that upon the creature's first appearance at the table.

When the cat had ceased purring (or should I say "speaking"?) Steel began speaking (or should I say "purring"?) very softly. Again I caught the vaguest shadow of a meaning which instantly left me. If indeed he was speaking at all, it was in no modern tongue. Only one sound in the musical flow of sounds which he gave forth bore any resemblance to any sound with which I am familiar. That sound was not unlike "Cleo." From the manner of its use I judged that this was the name of the cat, although I confess that this is merely a conjecture of mine.

When Steel had ceased my hostess gracefully left her high-chair and disappeared. Whereupon I felt as one suddenly relieved of a great weight. Such a feeling has no doubt been experienced by the reader upon the departure from the room of some celebrity of strongly magnetic personality. Although I am of an extremely skeptical turn of mind, I am half convinced that some powerful personality *did*

leave the table with the departure of the cat.

I immediately regained my composure and my hunger.

During my renewed attack upon the omelet I felt obliged to speak to my friend in no equivocal manner.

"Steel," I said, summoning what I could of a naturally small stock of severity, "this is an utterly idiotical proceeding and I, as your nearest friend, feel obliged to protest! It would pain me beyond measure to be convinced of mental decay in you; but this is indeed an insane proceeding, and I insist upon your laughing at once and being so kind as to point out to me forthwith precisely where the humor in the situation may lie!"

So violently did I hurl these words at my friend that I could say no more, but fell upon the omelet in a manner so savage that I thus discovered a hitherto hidden phase of my nature which alarmed me. But in the suavest of manners and in a peculiarly musical voice my friend answered: "As I have said, Reynolds, you have the disgusting habit of seeing only with your eyes and hearing only with your ears! Please do not disclose your limitations quite so freely; at least until the *end of this!*"

When I had finished eating I arose from the table and announced my intention of again climbing to the summit; and feeling somewhat ashamed of my heated words, asked Steel if he would accompany me. He stated that with my permission he would remain in the cabin, as it was his habit to do a certain amount of reading at that time of day. I went out much perplexed at what I had seen.

When I returned an hour later I found Steel deep in a book. Having inquired as to what he was reading, he answered: "A rather clever work of art, as art goes; but a most ridiculous bit of history—Shakespeare's 'Antony and Cleopatra.'"

"I believe the Master-Poet consulted Plutarch for his history, did he not?" said I.

"My friend," said he, "Plutarch

was a mere credulous boy, hearing only with his ears and seeing only with his eyes!" This astounding retort was uttered in that musical voice and with that suave manner which were beginning to wear upon my nerves.

"Steel," said I, with considerable coolness, "I recommend that you begin at once to rearrange the world's store of facts!"

In the most matter-of-fact manner he replied: "And who would believe my version if I should?"

"Oh, I'm sure I don't know!" I answered, with a sickening sense of being unable to arouse my friend. There was a silence for some time, during which I was possessed with a wild desire to snatch my poor friend out of this mad swirling stream of thought that seemed bearing him rapidly toward a fate far worse than death.

"O Steel! My friend!" I cried. "For God's sake be as you were of old! *Can't* you arouse yourself! *Don't* you see the inevitable end of this?"

With a smile of ineffable pity he met my passionate appeal. "Reynolds," said he quietly, "my good friend, you cannot possibly understand. And something is about to happen which shall further mystify you. But have no fear; I am not insane. On the contrary, I have discovered the great secret of life and death. In a foolish burst of confidence this morning I attempted to reveal to you a portion of this secret. You are incapable of receiving it, and I advise you to keep silence as to what you hear and see in this place, lest your own sanity be questioned.

"Reynolds, listen! I have discovered the psychic ear and the psychic eye! As to my statement concerning this rather ingenious drama and the history upon which it is supposed to be founded, it might be interesting for you to know that *only last night I was at the court of Cleopatra!*"

As when one watches through a long anxious night beside the bed of a friend stricken with a mortal illness, and will not give him up until the death rattle has passed and a chilling quiet falls in

the room, so had I watched and hoped. But now my heart sank. I was convinced that Steel—the chum of my boyhood, the companion of my maturity, the genius of rare promise—was stark mad!

And yet—since it is all over—I have thought much on the subject, and am almost prepared to reverse my decision, hastily formed in that most hideous hour.

IV

I HESITATE as I find myself about to narrate the happenings which ended that week of mystification; for those happenings were so thoroughly out of proportion with our ordinary ideas of things that I fear, from those who shall read this, even a more serious charge than that of mendacity. But as to my soundness of mind I wish to state with becoming modesty that I was only recently chosen by a large majority of my fellow-citizens to discharge the duties of an important county office.

During the day preceding the night on which the end came Steel was much occupied; in fact, he left his room only once. I noted with additional alarm that he seemed to have all but lost his senses of sight and hearing. When I spoke to him he gave no evidence of having heard, but stared through me, seemingly, as though I were transparent.

I went to bed that night with the firm intention of making an effort the very next morning to remove him to some private sanatorium, for I still clung to the idea that he was mad. At no other time had I experienced such a heartache, and it was only after several hours of tossing about that I fell into a feverish sleep.

I judge it must have been at about four o'clock in the morning that I was snatched violently out of my slumber by a peculiar cry. It seemed to come from a great distance; and while I thought it to be the cry of a woman, there was about it something that suggested the moaning of a cat.

Thoroughly frightened, I sat trembling on the edge of the bed and listened. The strange cry died away as though swallowed up in great spaces; and then there came ever so faintly a sound not unlike the complaining of a rough sea, though it seemed to me at the time like the hoarse shouting of a far-away multitude.

Suddenly the same cry that had awakened me grew up again. It seemed to emanate from Steel's room. A wild, unearthly sound that made my flesh crawl and gave to my scalp that prickling sensation so often described as a standing of the hairs!

Shivering as with a chill and tottering like a drunken man, I made my way to the door of Steel's room. I shouted his name aloud, but received no answer. A silence fell; a silence even more terrible than the cry, because of something awful latent in it!

I remember shrieking with fright when John, the Chinaman, appeared with a lamp. I remember the ghastly appearance of his face in the sudden light, the chattering of his teeth, the terror-stricken eyes.

Then there came from the room a final cry that chilled my brain as though an icy wind had blown upon it; a cry wild and piercing at first, but dying away into a pitiful minor wail.

I hesitated no longer. Throwing myself violently against the door, I found myself staring into an empty room!

Empty? Yes, and no. Steel was not there; but *something was there!* Something that was a sound, yet not a sound; a light, yet not a light.

For I was aware of a ghostly sort of sound, beautiful beyond the dreams of musicians; a something like and unlike light, exquisitely pleasing. For a moment I stood entranced. I seemed no longer in a room; the place seemed without bounds. It was neither dark nor light, neither silent nor containing sound.

But instantly the strange sensation left me. With that instinct of all frightened animals which drives them to their kind in moments of danger, I

turned to the Chinaman. I could see neither him nor the lamp! I called to him, but could not hear my own voice! I stepped to the place where he had been and my hand fell upon the hot globe of the lamp. I could feel the vibrations of the heat above it, but could see no light, though I knew the lamp to be still burning. I felt about in the dark for the face of the man. I touched his mouth. The lips were moving rapidly, but I heard no sound!

Had my senses been momentarily paralyzed by those invisible, unheard vibrations of which my poor friend had spoken? Had I stepped for a moment *beyond the spectrum?*

After a lapse of time that seemed an age the dim outlines of the lamp and the Chinaman and the room began to grow before me, and I began to hear again. By daylight my senses were again quite normal.

All that day we two searched for Steel in vain, and the cat did not appear. Several years have passed since then, and still in spite of the most diligent searching I have found no clue to the disappearance of my friend.

No clue? At least none that could be accepted as such by the reader or, I confess, by myself. I have in my possession a few scraps of paper upon which certain incoherent notes are scrawled in the handwriting of my friend. The greater part of the writing is illegible, and judging from the numbers on the pages, many sheets have been, for some reason, destroyed. Below I submit to the reader all that I can decipher of these notes. At times I seem to catch a vague significance from them, half believing that I can imagine what the illegible words are. I do not insist that they are the notes of a sane man; neither do I wish to commit myself to the contrary.

FRAGMENTS OF STEEL'S NOTES

(page 3)

... perhaps the greatest discovery of all time; one which . . . all hitherto accepted archeological . . . but . . . and . . . coming of the cat . . . (Here as indicated by the numbers, five pages are missing) . . . can no longer doubt that . . .

and that nothing has ceased . . .
merely passing out of the range of the five
physical senses of man!

. . . coexists with us, though invisible,
and . . . kingdoms . . . as one
might say, between seeing, hearing, tasting,
touching and smelling . . . often enter-
taining unawares historical personages

(Here four more pages are missing)

Many hitherto unexplained psychological
phenomena . . . pageant of history has
not ceased but is continuous . . . my-
self seen the heterogeneous . . . driven
. . . Xerxes . . . into Greece . . .
Strymon(?) . . .

(Ten missing pages here)

. . . when I have at last . . . shall

become free . . . shackled . . .
with Cleo(patra?)

(The next page is utterly illegible with the
exception of a few words in the last sentence)
. . . once more . . . shall not re-
turn into the . . . illusions . . .
spectrum!

I have given as much of the notes
as I could decipher. They seem to
have been jotted down under a great
nervous strain, many lines appearing
to me like a continuous stroke of a
quivering pen point. How much would
I be willing to give for the complete
notes in legible form!



WHERE SLEEP THE GODS

By Thomas S. Jones, Jr.

TREAD softly through this vale of asphodel,
Nor let harsh echoes wake its hallowed spell;
Peace lingers here and tenderly has flung
Her mantle o'er the myrtle and the rose—
Mayhap, beneath our very feet—who knows?—
They sleep, the gods, who long ago were young!

Unknown to them the tumult and the stress
Of flying years—only forgetfulness;
Unmindful e'en when all the glade has rung
With the sweet strain of some rapt nightingale,
For little now can loveliness avail—
They sleep, the gods, who long ago were young!

So softly tread this vale of asphodel,
Nor let the echoes break its ancient spell,
Where once a golden song was gladly sung;
Here, they are free from memory and pain,
Here, till they come unto their own again,
They sleep, the gods, who long ago were young!



THE BUSINESS INSTINCT

MADGE—I see that several novelists are in favor of phonetic spelling?
MARJORIE—Naturally. That would make a new dialect for them to
write in.

COUSIN DÉLICE

By Harriet Gaylord

IN front of the white, old-fashioned New England house magnificent maples stood as sentinels on guard lest an encroaching modernity should lay its defiling hand on the sacred architecture of Puritan tradition. Off to one side of the yard was a rose arbor; between two of the trees swung a hammock; rustic benches and chairs were in evidence; but the house itself was guiltless of porch or portico, balcony or gable—stark and unadorned except for the roses which rejected the traditions of Puritanism and clamored everywhere, redeeming the severe structure from ugliness.

At a sharp click of the gate latch Annette Delancey ran to her window. "Oh, it's you, Murray," she called. "Wait in the arbor and I'll be down."

In a moment she came, trailing the white skirts of her French embroidered frock carelessly over the grass; slender, stately, the type of beautiful woman at whom one always turns to look in a crowd; the patrician type whom exclusive English people on first acquaintance invite to tea.

Murray Ransome, dusty and travel-stained, bearing the hall-mark of the man of affairs, raised first one cool white hand and then the other to his lips. He would have ventured further had he deemed the encouragement sufficient, but Annette smiled and murmured:

"Let me hear first if you have earned your reward."

"There's not a doubt of the contract. The Herr Direktor wants to hear you sing. Your voice will do the rest."

"He read all of those fulsome testimonials?"

"Every one, and cried out in amazement, '*Gott in Himmel!*'"

"When does he want to see me?"

"The sooner the better. He sails for Germany in two weeks."

"Thank you so much! You think it is sure?"

"I wish I felt as sure of my dinner tonight as I do that you will sing in grand opera next Winter."

"I wish you did! You are going to have just supper here with us, poor boy! What will Cousin Délice say?"

"Be overjoyed, as I am, of course. Why not?"

"I don't know, Murray. Délice was awfully cordial to me in Paris and made a heap of me, of course, but some way I think she doesn't want me to sing. She will be in grand opera next Winter herself."

"Absurd! Délice is too big to be jealous. She might well be, of course, if she were inclined that way. Her voice isn't a circumstance to yours, and—well, you have other qualifications which she lacks."

She smiled at him, whimsically lifting her brows, then cried impulsively:

"Tell me what they are! I love to have you tell me!"

"Come and sit beside me, princess, and I will," he answered. "Come! I want my reward."

"But the neighbors!"

"The gate clicks warning."

"And my mother!"

"She has been there herself!"

"Ah, dear mother! Murray, it will nearly kill her to have me 'on the stage.' Those three words typify so much that is horrible to her. She hasn't the artistic temperament. If

father had lived it would have been different. I am so much more a Delancey than a Wright!"

"I wish I had known your father."

"Yes, I know, dear, mother is a bit difficult. It's the unbending Puritan you feel in her. You and father would have been great friends. You are 'in the show business,' and that's enough to black-list you forever for mother. I believe she said her prayers twice a day all the time that I was in Paris that something would happen to call me home; and when father died her compensation was that I must leave that godless city."

"I don't see how you can be so patient with her lack of reason, dearest."

"Ah! some of her blood flows in my veins! Then she is such a delicate little mother. Sometimes when she pleads and cries, Murray—you will be horrified, I know—I think if I didn't have to do something to bring in money, I'd never have the heart to go against her wishes."

"You would give up your career?" The incredulity in his voice made the blood surge to her face.

"Oh, I know you think me mad. It's that dreadful easy-going trend in me. I look independent, but I really am not. I can't bear to hurt people, and family jars set me all on edge. I haven't a note in my voice after an hour of arguing with my mother. And—we two are all alone, you know. Father always gave in to her."

Murray's face was stern in its disapproval.

"I'm afraid I haven't much sympathy with the vampire absorption of children by parents. To me the pelican seemed more in the right of it, and responsibilities pass forward rather than backward. I think your mother is plain selfish. But let's not argue. Will you go to New York with me tomorrow?"

"Why, yes, I think so. Oh, Murray, I'm going to do it! Don't look at me like that! I'm glad I have a voice, and I want to be great and have you proud

of me, and I'm glad I have you, and I'm going to break my mother's heart because it's the only way to get the money she must have to live comfortably, so please don't mind my weakness so much!"

"You are adorable when you plead like that!"

"And yet you want me to be hard to my mother!"

He laughed.

"I'm afraid I do want you to be the princess to everyone else but me. Are the affairs so bad?"

"Awful! I was with the lawyers all the morning. Mother doesn't know, but she will have only three hundred dollars a year."

"And this house?"

"It is heavily mortgaged."

"Annette!" called a thin, querulous voice from the doorway. "Annette!"

"Yes, mother." The girl went to the door of the arbor. "Do you want me? Murray's here."

"Come in the house, both of you, won't you? It's lonely."

"Yes, mother. Come, Murray," she said, laughing. "Anyhow, her nap lasted longer than I expected."

"Come back here!" he cried indignantly. "I want my reward!"

She came.

"You poor boy! Here's a little butterfly now, and this evening when you come to supper in cool white flannels you shall have a bigger one! . . . Oh, you've rumped my hair shockingly!"

The next day, thanks to her engagement to his right-hand man, Murray Ransome, Annette signed a contract with the Herr Direktor on practically her own terms. Then began weeks of argument with her mother, who had all the stubbornness of a long line of prejudiced ancestors. Even when her daughter told her the truth about their financial affairs she was wholly unreasonable. Annette grew pale and worried, her voice was suffering, the battle seemed interminable, Murray was abroad. Then one day, to her amazement, she received a letter from a New York firm of lawyers:

DEAR MADAM:

We are instructed to place at your disposal annually the amount of four thousand dollars on condition of your signing an agreement never to sing in opera or give any kind of a concert. The further condition is annexed that you shall make no inquiry as to the donor of this sum of money. If you suspect whence it comes, you are never to express your gratitude, or in any other way acknowledge that a gift has been made. This income will be paid during the lifetime of our client. Should death ensue, provision will be made for the money to be paid until you attain the age of forty-five. This, we understand, secures the above income to you for twenty years. Kindly inform us if you accept these terms. On receipt of your reply we will forward to you the necessary papers, unless you find it convenient to call at our office.

We are, madam,

Yours very respectfully,

BLACK, DUNCAN & SLADE.

Not for a moment did Annette doubt the source of this offer. Of late her mother had written many times to her crusty elder brother, a rich Maine farmer, who would sympathize with her entirely regarding the step her daughter proposed to take, and who would gladly use his money to prevent what he would consider a family disgrace. This would be his method. If Annette had had only herself to think of, the money would have offered no temptation, but with her mother's needs in view she felt she had no right to reject the moderate competency without due reflection.

In the certainty that her mother was to some degree responsible for the offer, Annette fought the battle by herself. She slept little nights, and by day tramped miles through the country trying to face the situation from every side. She did not realize that she was hardly in a condition to decide so grave a matter. At the end of four years of hard work in Paris had come the news of the sudden death of her father, whom she adored, and since that shock her high-strung, sensitive temperament had suffered more than she knew from the solitude, restricted atmosphere and constant friction of the life at home.

How could she renounce her ambition? Her voice was glorious, she knew that, and, thanks to her father,

faultlessly trained. She had every reason to believe Murray's confidence in her was not misplaced, and under favorable conditions she might become one of the queens of song. Happily married to Murray, who never had any money of his own because he was such a millionaire of a spendthrift, achievement would be easy. So far as money was concerned, her mother would never suffer if all went well. But her mother wanted more than money—care, companionship, the constant devotion which would mean the blighting of her daughter's hopes. And a voice was such an uncertain dependence; the nervous throat trouble might at any moment end her career. If she took this money, she thought bitterly, it would not matter if she lost her voice. And Murray—would he forgive her? Would he understand? Must she lose him, too? Could she bear that? And could she, after all, sacrifice her great ambition? Then she would live over in imagination all that success would mean, coming back always to the present unhappiness and the balm so near at hand.

A week passed thus. One day when she was singing her voice broke, failed utterly; the strain had told.

"Oh, I must be happy or I can't sing! How can I ever be happy? If I leave mother ill and alone by deliberate choice and renounce that money, I shall be hunted to death by my conscience. Oh, why did Uncle Hiram tempt me this way?"

Just then her mother entered the room. Annette sprang to bolster her up with pillows and make her comfortable, marking her agitation the while. She noticed the letter in her hand.

"Has the mail come, Mamsy dear?" she asked.

"Yes, and I've had such a shock. Your Uncle Hiram has been unfortunate in his investments, has had to sell his farm, and wants to come and live with us."

"Does he? Let me see." Annette read the letter thoughtfully. Was this the way they left her no loophole

of escape? Her mother was nearly sixty; Uncle Hiram ten years older. However much her heart cried out in impotence at having her life shaped by these two whose lives were almost finished, she felt a crushing certainty that she must bow her head to the yoke.

At last her mother spoke:

"If you'd only teach singing here and in Hartford, Annette, we all could be so happy. Uncle Hiram doesn't think much of your going on the stage. Minnie Harper wants to take lessons. She has a real sweet voice."

Ah! Thank God and Uncle Hiram, if the Fates were to cut short her career, she need not be a music-teacher! "We all could be so happy!" What did it matter if she were sacrificed? She loved happiness herself, and here were two people who wanted it and felt she could give it; people who, moreover, felt they had the right to demand it at her hands. What did it matter, anyhow? She could see only one step ahead, and she would take that step.

The next day she wrote to the lawyers, accepting their terms. Her mother showed such forced surprise at the announcement of the bequest that Annette's suspicions were confirmed. Mrs. Delancey's joy, however, was gratifying, and Uncle Hiram's arrival with most of his worldly possessions was at least a diversion. The old man was lugubrious and needed cheering, so Annette's days were cut out for her, brimful of self-sacrifice and duty. She no longer had the heart to practice her music. In fact, she seemed no longer to have a heart at all—only some sort of mechanism which kept her going.

She had cabled the Director asking for release from her contract, assigning throat trouble as the reason for her request. He had just discovered a new soprano in Munich, and the contract was canceled. Murray's response to her announcement was not encouraging:

Amazed and troubled. Returning next steamer.

When he came she met him at the door.

"My dear! my dear!" he cried, shocked at the change in her appearance. "What has happened?"

"Let's go out in the arbor," she said. "It's so much nicer. Mother is having her nap again!"

In the shadow of the rose vines he drew her to him, then held her at arm's length and looked his interrogation. Her beauty of outline and feature had lost the radiance of color. The spirit was dead in this woman. As they sat hand in hand, she told him all. He stiffened, froze.

"Ah!" she cried sharply, "don't take it like that! Don't, dear, don't! I need your comfort. It was so hard to do what seemed to me the only right thing after Uncle Hiram made that sacrifice and gave me the money. Did you love me, the woman, or only what you thought you might make of my voice?"

"I loved you, Annette."

"Loved?" she cried.

"I loved the woman I knew," he went on ruthlessly; "the woman of glorious, boundless possibilities, of even more glorious beauty. But the woman I believed you to be could never have committed suicide as you have done. Where was your pluck? Your Cousin Délice——"

"Yes, Délice?" she demanded as he hesitated.

"She is in no sense your equal except in her spirit, and there she infinitely surpasses you. She is the artist to her finger-tips, and no obstacle will hold her back from achievement. She's not good-looking, her voice is not extraordinary, she has money to burn and doesn't need to work, but her spirit will carry her to the top notch, while—oh, for shame! for a paltry competence you throw away ambition, talents greater than those of any other woman I have ever known, a magnificent life of infinite possibilities! It is insanity and murder and suicide. And the very worst, to me, is that you did not think me worthy of your confidence—you did not ask my

advice, my aid. You signed away the life you had promised to me as if I were a mere outsider, and only tell me calmly when it is too late for any word of mine to point out the madness of your mistake!"

She had risen and stood before him, regal in her attitude, all the blood in her body rising to flush her face to unearthly beauty that he might remember her thus.

"If you have finished," she said. "I need only say that your words have proved that we do not and never have understood each other. You entirely fail to see that duty to my family entered quite as much into my decision as the desire of a competence for myself. I was therefore obliged to put all thought of you aside—how wisely your own words now show me. Your ring, my friend!" She drew it from her finger and placed it on the table. Then she smiled at him proudly. "Go, and thank your good fairies that no responsibility for my suicide rests on you."

The following Summer Cousin Délice sent to Mrs. Delancey the announcement of her marriage to Murray Ransome after a Winter of phenomenal success in grand opera. Outwardly Annette made no sign, and wrote her congratulations to her cousin, from that time following the career of Délice without a trace of envy. Once she remained in New York overnight and heard her sing Brünnhilde, but she never spoke of this experience to anyone. The grave of her ambition had been dug deep, and each day she piled higher the stones of self-effacement and sacrifice as she ministered unceasingly to the whims of a crotchety, aging uncle and invalid mother.

One Winter, in visiting a poor family, she herself caught scarlet fever, and that seriously affected her voice. A certain beauty she still retained, but one cannot resign youth with its love and ambition and joys without paying the penalty. At thirty-five she looked ten years older, a mature woman of gentle grace and distinction, but piti-

ably faded. Then one day when she was shopping in New York a sudden jolt as she entered a crowded street-car threw her into a man's arms. She turned to apologize, and looked into the face of Murray Ransome.

All bitterness toward him had left her heart long ago.

"Why, Murray!" she cried, feeling suddenly youthful again.

But the surprise in his eyes called her to herself. Cousin Délice had visited them several times—Murray never. It was a moment before he recognized her and gripped her hand.

"Annette! You! Why, I didn't know you at first!"

"You've changed a bit yourself!" she retorted, with something of the old spirit.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose so. Where are you going?"

"To the train."

"Stay over till three o'clock and let me take you to luncheon."

"I'll be delighted. Has Délice returned?"

"No, I expect her tomorrow on the *Kaiser Wilhelm*."

When they were seated opposite each other at Sherry's and he had given the order, he smiled.

"Well, how is life, Cousin Annette?"

"You tell me first, Cousin Murray."

"It has told on you."

"Yes, but the other might have been worse."

He deliberated for a moment, and then said:

"This is like meeting beyond the grave, isn't it? Let's be honest with each other. Annette, I declare to you that the other would have been infinitely better, infinitely right for you and me. All feeling about the matter was dead in me long ago. I speak from sane, sober conviction. You should not have murdered your career, and you should have married me. What have you to say to that?"

She had suddenly gone very white.

"Murray," she answered impulsively, "feeling isn't dead in me. That's the difference between us two.

But I'll tell you the truth since we are beyond the grave. I've eaten my heart out in starvation all these years. It is something ghastly for a woman who has committed suicide in her youth to wander unburied among people of flesh and blood! I am old, centuries old, but I still have a hungry heart. Duty! God in heaven, what a mockery that word is when one has frozen to its call! No one dreams how I feel. Probably people speak of my life as sweet, and gentle, and unselfish, but to me it seems a horrible abortion. Yet if I had the same choice to make again under the same circumstances, I am convinced that I should in no wise choose differently."

"But if you had the same choice to make with the experience you have gained?"

The pent-up rebellion of aborted years broke forth in an exceeding bitter cry.

"Today I should choose my career and you, and reconcile the other duties as best I could. The young have a right to live their lives."

"Amen! and we both missed that right."

"You, Murray?"

"Yes, I! I had my chance to make you see the right, to weary you till you did. But with the blind, hurt egotism of a selfish cad, I threw away my great opportunity to save you and myself. It was not wholly my fault in a way I cannot explain. I believed something of you I had no business to believe. Call it the misfortune of my obtuseness, but when I lost that opportunity I lost my right to my life."

"You—you are not happy with Délice?"

The bitterness was his now. Man-like, he showed it by a laugh.

"Damnably unhappy, since we speak beyond the grave. You have never married a rich woman—this particular rich woman. Let us not talk about it or I shall be a cad again. I deserve everything that has come to me."

The tears stood in her eyes.

"I am sorry!" she said. Then, after a moment, quietly, as if all feeling were

dead in her also: "It is very bitter that when one makes a disastrous choice the consequences do not stop with one's self. I am very sorry, my friend."

He rose to the moment.

"After all, why should we blame ourselves? It seems to be a law of life, this befuddlement, doesn't it? And neither is *in extremis*. I have ceased to feel or to care greatly. My life is tolerable enough. You——"

"I died still-born," she interrupted fiercely, "and so escaped living at all! It's sorry comfort, Murray. At least, though, I'm glad we've met beyond the grave. Some way it's a comfort to know—to know I've not borne everything alone."

He looked in her eyes gravely, then repeated:

"You have not borne everything alone."

For the rest they talked of indifferent matters. Only when they parted at the train he said, smiling:

"Thank you for today, Annette. I feel less lonely now."

"And I," she answered, "am glad you—feel less lonely."

Two days later Délice dropped in upon Annette at the hour when Murray had been wont to arrive. She radiated prosperity, and art and modiste had combined to atone for the deficiencies of nature. She greeted Annette coldly, asking:

"Where is Aunt Anna?"

"Just having her forty winks. Shall I call her?"

"No, don't. I wanted to be sure she wouldn't interrupt. I came to see you. I want to know exactly what has been going on between you and Murray while I was abroad."

"Why, Délice! what do you mean? I met Murray by chance on Saturday in a street-car for the first time in ten years."

"So he said. I wonder if you are telling the truth?"

Annette laughed. The situation was too absurd.

"Look at me, Délice," she cried, "a faded, wrinkled old maid! Then

look at yourself in that glass over there and I think that is all the answer you need. You don't mean you are jealous of a worn-out husk like me?"

There was an evil light in Délice's eye.

"Oh, I know what I am talking about," she said. "Murray was always difficult enough anyway. Now you've renewed your acquaintance with him he will be unbearable. Half-an-hour after I got into the house yesterday he flounced out of it, and I haven't seen him since. Has he been here?" she fiercely demanded.

"No, of course not!" replied Annette coldly. "I assure you, Délice, it was only a chance meeting, and we may never see each other again in the world. You are absurd to be jealous."

The evil light grew more lowering.

"I know it!" Délice cried. "I am mad to be jealous of you. Murray despises you in his heart for a poor creature who gave up a great career to live on the bounty of his wife. Murray has no use for such as you. Let him alone!"

"My God!" Annette sprang to her feet and towered above the other woman. "Délice, what in heaven's name do you mean?"

"Oh, you hypocrite! Do you pretend you haven't known all these years who gave you that bribe? Who else had the money to throw away on you? Who else had any reason for wishing you shrouded in obscurity? You sold yourself and I bought you. You took the bribe and kept still about it. Aunt Anna wrote to ask me to use my influence with the Director and Murray. I did better than that. I know she has never kept the secret from you."

"You gave me that money?"

"Of course I did. You know it perfectly well."

"And my mother knew?"

"Of course."

"And Murray?"

"Yes, I told him. You can imagine he hasn't thought much of you since."

"Oh, my God!" Annette stood staring at Délice. Then she laughed

shrilly as one who has lost his reason. "And I never knew I had a viper for a cousin!"

"Annette, behave yourself! Do you mean to say you didn't know?"

"No, I didn't. I thought you were a woman."

"Oh, come to yourself! You didn't know I gave you that money?"

"Since you know me so little as to ask, before God I did not."

"Who did you think did it?"

"Uncle Hiram."

"Oh, I see. Because he hated your going on the stage. Well, he didn't; I did it. I hated you for your beauty, for your voice, because Murray Ransome loved you as I loved my art and him. I did my work and did it effectually, it seems."

She rose and buttoned her jacket. "I'm going now. You are a poor creature, Annette. I don't think I shall feel jealous of you any longer. I'm glad I came to see you. The money will go on just the same for ten years more."

She started toward the door, but Annette stood in her path. The tiger which lies in every woman born to be a mother broke loose, and Délice quailed before its onrush.

"A poor creature, am I, Cousin Délice? Yes, I have been that, and the blood is on your head. But why? Because I believed in human nature! Because I believed in duty, and honor, and family ties, and gratitude, and generosity, and sacrifice, and helpfulness—things you, too, as a child were taught to hold sacred. Because I couldn't feel it right to trample on other lives that I might have the glorious career even then in my grasp. For whether you believe it or not, your money meant to me rather the comfort and peace of two old people than my comfort and peace. I haven't had those. I've felt that I lost all that makes life. Except yourself, I've been the biggest sufferer for my mistake. Yes, except yourself! I am a poor creature, but at least I've lined up on the side of those who try to help and not hinder, to give happiness and not

destroy, perhaps who even leave life a little better than they found it. My God! there are worlds between my poverty and yours—the abyss which separates poor, mistaken, groping human nature with one hand stretched out to the skies, from devils and their machinations. You bought my beauty and my voice and my youth and my happiness with your blood money, and you would have bought my soul, but some kind fate sent you here with your malignant taunts today. I've been a slave, but you have set me free: I've been rebellious, I've been starved, I've been strangled; I've done my duty, loathing it all the while, but now I know it isn't what one feels that counts

—it's what one does. I've got a flash of light like those that come to people when they die. You have tried to hurt another's life, *Délice*, and you've lost your own—you've thrown it to the dogs! I didn't know it, but I've lived mine. I've lived it very badly, but I've lived it, and, please God, I'll live it now with all my heart and soul! No more blood money for me, Cousin *Délice*! I am sorry for you. You're the real poor creature. You have made me very rich today, and—oh, the pity of it—you do not dream how poor you are! Go!"

And *Délice* passed out of the door in defiant scorn, not comprehending.



THE SUPREME HOUR

By Elsa Barker

WHEN comes the supreme hour for me to die,
 When, justified of life, I turn at last
 To question the pale secret of the past
 And to be one with it, O Love, that I
 May have thy clinging lips to fortify
 My spirit for the journey! I would cast
 My soul upon thy kiss as on some vast
 And shoreless ocean refluxent with the sky.

Oh, may this dual intimate ecstasy
 Be as my bark to venture the unknown!
 Then to whatever region I am blown
 By the death wings of evening, I shall be
 Borne upon rapture—nevermore alone—
 Though incorporeal, still one with thee.

THE MUSIC OF LIFE

By Bliss Carman

A BRILLIANT woman once said to me, "Life without abandon to me is a dance without music." And I knew instantly what she meant, with that delight one always feels in the perception of a fresh statement of truth. It was a poet's phrase, and as all good poetry will, it illumined the mind at once with a radiant conviction, and left itself in the memory as a perpetual word of wisdom. Every day, everywhere, I am constantly having it borne in upon me how true the saying is; and as I hear of the incidents in the lives of my friends, or of their friends, and as I watch the expression of men and women going by me in the street or gathered in public places, light-hearted with elation or depressed with complaining, I find myself repeating, not without something of the resigned detachment of the philosopher, "Life without abandon is a dance without music."

It is so easy to distinguish where music has gone out of a life, and where it still lingers with its enrapturing possession of the personality. Here go by the dejected mien, the dispirited walk, the drooping shoulders and slovenly gait, the eyes bent upon the ground, the head bowed in hopelessness; these are they who for one cause or another have lost the first fine abandon which is the natural heritage of every mortal born into a beautiful world; they have ceased to make magic music in their personalities; and while they still go through the motions of living, they are scarcely more than automata moving to a joyless mechanical rhythm, creatures of routine, puppets dancing without a

tune. Pity them, for they are the unfortunates of the great army of triumphant humanity—not only the deserters and stragglers from the ranks, but the weak, the ignorant, the ill-advised, the wayward, who have somehow strayed beyond the sound of the fifes and drums and go blundering on out of step and forlorn, perhaps wilfully searching for freedom, perhaps only vainly looking for rest, and never guessing that all their way-faring must be bound in misery unless they can recover the trail of that high inspiring music they have lost, and which somewhere far in the van is still calling them to enthusiastic allegiance, still marking an irresistible beat for their feet to follow.

If there are many in whom the music of life is hushed or jangled there are more in whom it is resonant and alluring still. For among the multitude of the silenced, tuneless personalities, pace for pace with the dejected and disheartened, moves the splendid company of confident men and spirited women, those who walk with springing step and lifted chest, with dancing eyes and traces of rapture in their bearing. They may not be radiant with happiness, they may even be sorely touched by natural sorrow, but in either case they carry themselves with a freedom and intensity, with an alertness and vibrancy, that bespeak the undefeated soul and the mind still free from the blight of disillusion and discord. One sees at a glance that they have not surrendered to misfortune, nor been tainted by any inward corruption of fear or despair or ruthless cruelty, and if black pessimism

has ever whispered in their ears, it has not been able to mark them for its own. For them the bands are still playing enlivening airs, as the human pageant files along in its tatterdemalion celebration of living. Whether they be going afoot or on horseback, in velvet or in rags, matters little to them. The one great fact is, that they are filled with the music of life; never having allowed themselves to become unstrung; their resonant personalities are still played upon by the ravishing harmonies of beneficent, joyous being.

The music of life is everywhere, and those who have apprehended its presence in themselves and in others are in possession of an invaluable knowledge. It must always seem to them of the first importance to maintain their power of abandon, of rapture, of exuberance, at all hazards, let their actual fortune be what it may. They will make any sacrifice, forego any material advantage, disrupt any bondage, to save their natural responsiveness—their zest, their spontaneity, their faculty of individually re-echoing to the concord of existence. To be out of tune with themselves and incapable of sharing in the mighty music of human life, whether that music be glad or sad, sorry or triumphant, must appear to them as the greatest of human misfortunes, for they will truly apprehend such injury as a fatal beginning of death.

Abandon in life—vivacity, animation, ardor—is like music in that it gives and demands enlarged scope and freedom for action, and introduces us into an ideal world, where the will may find free play without harm, where "nothing beautiful is extravagant, nothing delightful unworthy." Those who walk the world in a cloak of unsundered rapture, however worn and threadbare their actual garments may be, are in possession of ampler opportunities and enjoy purer and more generous rewards than any grudging, unjoyous labor can command. They always have hope and faith and charity, because by some

means they always keep attuned to unpolluted life, to nature, to the world, to society, to truth and beauty, and never permit themselves to be severed from the great choral unison of fellow-beings, nor cease from bearing part in the divine vibrancy of existence. They may have griefs in plenty and adversities without end, but they will not live in toneless despair—they will not become passive automata ruled by rote. Dance they must, and they refuse to dance without music.

This metaphor of the musicalness of life is applicable to many things. The music of wealth is the freedom it gives us, the power of realizing our generous impulses immediately and without hindrance, as in an ideal world. The music of night is its space and mystery and the liberation it offers the spirit from the unimaginative limitations of the day. They miss its music who do not yield to that fascination of vast, majestic leisure and solemnity, as those miss the music of wealth who carry on their affairs, on whatever scale, in a spirit of penurious, fretful timidity, without ever hearing the melody of spontaneous generosity and the greater harmony which would arise from making the utmost use of their resources. The music of a great festival like Christmas is the spirit of love and kindness which it celebrates. We miss that music altogether if we allow ourselves to make a burden of the day through petty selfishness or pride or greed; if we are unwilling to take pains for the enjoyment of others; if we let ourselves grow disgusted from a few hours' shopping, if we fear to give the little that we can afford joyously, or if we demand material enrichment. Great and worthy music is not produced without care and thought, nor sustained without effort.

The music of life is written in the key of the ideal, in the time of the possible, and with the cadences of personality. To be without ideals is to be incapable of appreciating or reproducing this magic music. Its

very source is ideality, its whole aim is to make real the encouragement of imaginary perfection, and to bring happiness actually to pass. Its rhythm, however, must not be impossible of performance; for ideals which are incapable of any practical realization are hardly ideals properly, but only fancies and phantasmagoria of the fertile mind. Moreover, it is only when the music of life shows a personal cadence, only when it is modified by this or that personality, that it has individual interest and significance. Personal cadence is what transforms the music of life into recognizable melody. Abandon in life finds its most opportune and appropriate field in the middle realm of the spirit, midway between high-pitched thought and low-tensioned physicality. True, it has its affinities, its roots and blossoms, in both these regions; it could not be born without taking thought of some object for an ardor and enthusiasm to attach to, and it could not be maintained without some pleasurable realization; but its service belongs chiefly to the emotional world. As the human voice shows its rarest beauty in the middle register, so the music we make of our lives shows its loveliest qualities when it is modulated to the compass and solace of the soul, between the extremes of ultimate thought and crude sensation. It can afford to make sparing use both of the deepest bass notes of the senses and the keen, thin treble of mentality. In the generous middle octaves where the chords of the heart are strung it finds its most congenial and potential range, and while daring to sound all notes throughout the gamut of being, uses most successfully and frequently those that are most sympathetic to human weal and woe.

This does not mean, however, that any melody can ever be made in the music of life without the command of the whole keyboard. The low, strong notes, when needed, are indispensable to give force and body; the fine, high notes to give clarity, definition and finesse. It is hardly possible to feel

the abandon of life without giving it some expression in voice or gesture, in speech or conduct, and without being influenced by it in imagination and thought. It is vital to the very essence of abandon that it should be shared by the whole personality without restriction. A strange sort of abandon that would be which stopped short with the impulse and never found vent in actual expression, nor ever had any effect on our ideas! Persons may accentuate one tone or another in human relationships—they may chiefly exchange thought or offer sympathy—but not magnetically or musically until the whole personality is harmoniously represented in the intercourse. You may form an acquaintance with an unknown person in a distant place by correspondence, but there can be no true fellowship or friendship until you meet him eye to eye and hand to hand. The primitive, wholesome instinct of the wolf within us must be satisfied, as well as the more tenuous requirements of spirit and intelligence, for in its sphere it is quite as fastidious and trustworthy as they.

Thus it is that men drink together to bind a bargain, or shake hands upon a transaction. The discussion of the subject and the final agreement to which it leads are mere processes of understanding, where personal bias need play no part. But after the terms have been settled, and if the men feel a liking for each other, they instinctively turn to some natural physical expression of their unanimity and sympathy; there is a relaxation of insistence; the senses begin to beg for their part in the compact; then the glasses are filled and, "Here's luck to the venture!" They find gladness in that abandon and become participants in the music to which the world goes round.

So, too, in affairs of the heart, as our grandsires called them, there is no assurance of a happy concord short of the ultimate test; and many a marriage has proved a pitiable disaster because the consenting mind and spirit led the senses blindfold into a relation from

which they revolted without compromise. There is no foretelling the preference of instinct, and in these sacred matters to do violence to instinct because of any supposed obligation to duty or advantage or self-interest is an abhorrent wrong punishable by death—sometimes death of the body, sometimes death of the soul. How often, too—perhaps how much more often—the opposite calamity occurs, when the too eager and willing senses find themselves responding to a seemingly kindred individual, only to discover when too late that there could be no harmony of feeling or understanding. Nature has arranged that the body shall know its own kith and kin, as the mind and soul know theirs, without heed to advisability or unselfishness; with an instinct that is uncompromising and unequivocating. It is this possibility of divergence between sense and spirit that works such havoc in our destinies, unless we learn at least to try to introduce some rational unison among our correlated but only half-reconciled powers through their appropriate education.

When some measure of this reconciliation has taken place, however, in any personality how capable of delightful melody it becomes—how responsive to an innocent and happy abandon! Then, indeed, is the fine music of life made possible. Then, indeed, may that thrice fortunate individual give thanks to the gods, for the music-makers in life are superior to circumstance. Possessed of so lovable a talent, so indestructible an asset, they are everywhere welcome for a charm that is never outworn. Whether they be wise or foolish, calamity cannot embitter them nor age render them unlovely. Having once become thus attunable, life plays upon them with all its infinitely variable phases, only to produce new measures of a universal harmony. And through their power of music-making, their capacity of transmuting every experience into some intelligible theme, either of gladness or sorrow, they escape the monotony, the tedious insignificance of those who are

discordant or mute. A nature in which such an adjustment has taken place may become as tuneful as an old violin; it can only mellow with years; so that to the end of life its ever enriching temperamental tone gives forth, to wise and gentle evocation, strains of rarest music.

When two such personalities meet and find themselves in harmony in all the realms of being—unanimous, congenial and at one in the delicate register of sense—so that their individual melodies may blend and mingle with perfect freedom and without disparity or discordance, the greater eternal music of life begins to be heard in all its purity and bewitchment. There can then be no jarring nor disagreement in those two fortunate ones, no fatal blighting conflict between spirit and sense in either life, to tear it asunder as so many lives are torn—no stirring of the blood while the heart is cold, no leaping of the emotional soul while the pulses still sleep, and neither infatuation nor rapture without the glad appreciative assent of the vigilant yet amenable mind. If love is the only source of abandon, the primal note in every melodious personality, it is also surely abundant sanction and sufficient fulfillment of the soul's dearest rhapsodies.

It is easy to recall in human history memorable names of characters who were verily permeated with the music of life. That, for a modern instance, was Stevenson's rare distinction. There was the frailest of mortals, in no way exceptionally favored by worldly circumstance, an invalid all his days, yet absolutely refusing to live without abandon. In spite of sickness or hard fortune, he would not dance without an accompaniment, and made music every hour he was alive. There are myriads like him unknown to fame, cheery, brave, diligent souls, who will not succumb to dreariness, weariness, skepticism nor despair. It may only be your Chinese laundryman, the porter who makes up your berth, the boy who runs your elevator, or the first cabby you pick up at the curb, who has the

magic gift of tuneful joyousness that, unreasonable as it may seem, will nevertheless make him a more desirable acquaintance for the hour than lugubrious brokers or unctuous divines. And consider, in comparison—if reports be true, poor gentleman!—such an inharmonious character as Carlyle's. It is a pity that so sturdy a soul should become a byword for crabbed unhappiness, but he comes to mind as an example of the type which is never happy, never makes music in life. His physical frailties were too great for him to overcome. A constant strife between body and soul, fretted by dyspepsia and railing against fate, make sad personal discord. He was among those who, for all their strength, have a mighty handicap to contend against in their own lack of harmony. The world is full of them, jangling dissonant souls, corroded by peevish discouragement, incapable of evolving any concord in their own beings and unable to produce any resonant joyousness to sweeten their noise or gladden their silence or in any way heighten the pleasure of their fellows. For them no task is easy, no matter how great their genius. Though they were emperors or prelates, they would still be merely slaves and drudges of the world, full of biliousness and resentment, feeling the very gift of existence to be a bane.

Abandon means fervor, ecstasy; enchantment of the mind, fascination of the will, enravishment of the senses—the brimming over of vitality, exuberance of spirit, the charming play of intelligence. It constitutes the good measure of life needed for great growth that is the mainspring of progress, in science, in religion and in art. Without some overabundance of impulsive ardor we should only stand still, having barely enough energy to carry us

through from day to day, from birth to death. And yet the quality of abandon I am thinking of is not an attribute only of youth or of an excess of physical vigor. You may see many old persons who continually make music in their beings as they sit by the fire all day long with their readings or their dreams. It is not that they have never known sorrow; they may have borne many grievous burdens; but the central spirit within them has never been infected with the sullen discontent which makes happiness forever impossible. Whatever evil destiny may have befallen them they have confronted with fortitude, never acknowledging the supremacy of hatred or harm, tempering instead of mutilating the fiber of their being, and so remaining always resonant with goodness and gaiety and a courage of endurance that no frailty can destroy. They have never ceased, and need never cease, from the ever welcome music-making of life, though many of their younger neighbors, perhaps more fortunate than they, with far less cause for the lassitude of despondency, may be coddling their moping souls in unbeautiful taciturnity and resentment.

Possibly these unfortunates never felt what abandon means, nor ever heard the entrancing music of life calling to them throughout the world. But as I see such folk living in desolate loneliness, dwelling, as it were, in the silent halls of gloomy imagination, unlovely and unloving, harboring to the last their grudge against the world, and as I contrast their defeat with the happy triumph of those sunny dispositions who never refrain from sweet-voiced fervency of enthusiasm even in age, I shake my head, repeating to myself, "Life without abandon is a dance without music."



IN ANNABEL'S AUTO

By Edwin L. Sabin

OUT and afar in her brand-new car
My Annabel took me riding,
With "choo" and "whirr" and a buoyant jar
Rapidly onward gliding.
In the soft, snug seat by my own, own sweet
I ventured—oh, fuddled dreamer:
"Dear girl—" Said she: "We're going to meet
The Richardsons' big black steamer!"

We passed it by, and I said: "Dear, I
Would tell you a message tender."
She oped her lips with a joyous cry
As we grazed a street-car's fender.
She murmured, "Yes?" I resumed, "You guess—"
Heart-torn, I was now heart-torner,
My message left but a futile mess
By her, "Watch how we round the corner!"

We swayed, we swung, I regained my tongue,
And I whispered, "Dearest, dearie,
Hark to a song, tho' oft-times sung.
Of longing, athirst, I'm weary."
She seemed to hark, as my eye could mark—
For more did my pleading whet her?
No, no! She cried: "There's a faulty spark—
Or else it's the carburetor!"

We "choo-ed" and "whirred," till again the word
I sought; I had won it—nearly,
And faint-heart he who is aught deterred
By an interruption, merely.
"I asked," I said, as we smoothly sped—
But I "asked" all unavailing.
She interposed: "Do you know it, Ned!
'Tis the gasoline that's failing!"

My message sweet can I ne'er complete?
Must it end in a feeble mutter?
Is there ne'er a lane nor a quiet street
Where I soulful speech may utter?
Must it be my fate that I always wait—
Oh, horrible, horrible thought, oh!
Are love and its language out of date
In Annabel's brand-new auto?

PENALTY

By Michael Storm

ON one side acres of buttercups isling, in a golden drowsiness, soft-moving kine. On the other the Channel, with its gray-blue waters and crisp scent of Western winds. And in between a few scattered thatches, the glint of pebble walls and the dwarfed tower of a church, brooding in a shimmer of ivy-leaves.

Garth Repton had sought the place for a week's holiday, believing that he would have the unadorned beach to himself; for the spot was far from the stench of patchouli, the blare of brass bands, the giddy irresponsibility of vernal exuberance, that all go to make a holiday resort dear to the heart of the British tripper.

He rose early the first morning, and in the blessed assurance of isolation and a keen blue dawn-light he sought the beach in his pajamas. He was astonished and somewhat annoyed to see a tent flaunting its red and white stripes above the shingle and further on, sporting in the rose-flecked waters, a woman. For a time he loitered about, oppressed by that awkward shyness which characterizes—may one say “nomenclates”?—the modesty of most Englishmen. Then the subtle voices of the water lured him, and seeking the shelter of a groin he stole guiltily, head first, into the waves.

His antics appealed to the woman, who, a year previously, had fled, abashed, from the aquatic costumes and coquetties of Trouville. The gaucherie of his mute reverence filled her with a calm respect, which prompted her, later in the day, to a courteous offer of her tent—the only one the village held—“if he would be good enough

to arrange the hours he cared to bathe.” The acquaintance ripened, as was inevitable, seeing that the month was June, that their gardens met in a low fence, that the breathless evening hours, enveloped in the burden of purple shadows and stars faintly gleaming through white vestments of mist, were instinct with a mute urgency of finding voice.

The woman had that calm, inscrutable marble beauty of face and form that recalled to the man tales of the old Northern Sagas. The ivory pallor of her face was lifted into an intense expression of spiritual vitality by the bronze-red shimmer of her hair that waved, in close silken ripples, over the temples and ears, and was gathered up again, like a crown of red-gold, on her head. Her great luminous gray eyes were instinct with the spirit of reminiscence, ever seeming to be on the verge of melting to some consenting dream. Beyond learning that her name was Edith Graham, the man knew nothing of her, nor, as she offered nothing further, did he seek to incur the suspicion of inquisitiveness. To him, indeed, she became, almost from the first, the incarnation of all his life had hitherto missed and craved for. A barrister, struggling, with the aid of a fair income, to achieve fame, he was constitutionally of a somewhat sour reserve and resentful self-consciousness. The ethos had won him few friends, and its demonstration had speedily estranged such as had been attracted to him. Without home or family, he had grown, like his own furniture, into the fixed gloom of a particular corner, amid the moldi-

ness and melancholy of his chambers. Contact with this creature of sculpturesque beauty and tranquil receptivity tortured his nature to a painful travail of obscure hope, whose growing strenuousness fiercely wrought against the crust of his habitual reticence.

The woman, floating dreamily, placidly, in her own world of thought, hardly heeded the unfolding evidence of his infatuation. While his nature was expanding beneath the subtle influences of her presence, she regarded him with the same grave unconscious tenderness that she had bestowed on the first awkwardness of his acquaintance with her. To her he was as one of the brown cattle that browsed, knee-deep and motionless, amid the golden sea of buttercups—a creature that the sun shone upon, an object on which her gaze might rest in dreamy, half-tender sympathy, because she discovered that he in no way intruded on the undisturbed content that lapped her mood.

One night as the stars flushed rosily through a mist of amber, the two sat together on a bench looking down at the shimmer and wash of the tide, as the purple ripples lunged and broke, and, to a rush of tinkling music, cradled the white pebbles through a fringe of glistening moonbeams.

The woman's face grew against the light, half-poised, half-drooping, as pale, as exquisitely still, as an Easter lily. Her whole being pulsed to the burden of the hour, its mystery of silence, its melodious assertion of love, of brooding passion whose yearning was unvoiceable. She hardly noticed the trembling of the man's tones as he began to speak. It seemed so natural that he should speak of love, and tell in tones so tremulous with truth a tale of passion and devotion. She let him speak on, vaguely drifting along the tide of his words, unswayed by any sense of their import, listening only to the gentle chiming they stirred among the harmonious vistas of her dreaming. It was only when she became aware that he had possessed himself of her hand, that his lips were

trembling against it, that his eyes, alight with a half-fearing wonder, were shining into hers, that she shrank back a little, with a long, faint sigh, slowly drawing her hand from his clasp. Her voice was very tender as she told him that his hopes were vain, that it could never be. And when he pleaded desperately, in tones vibrating to a note of fear, of wonder, of reproach, his passion seemed to her so piteous in its futile beauty of hope that her eyes suddenly saw him through a mist of tears, and in the glamour of a moment's sentiment she only weakly resisted him as he took her in his arms and kissed her, and swore that he would take no denial.

But when the man rose, exultant, the next day the dawn was struggling grayly through a drift of fine rain, and he waited in vain for her appearance. It was not till near midday that he learned, from the one village cab-owner, that she had gone up to town by the first train. He realized, with a shock, that he did not know her address. But hope made light of such an obstacle, and he followed by the next train. For two days he searched, wearying himself with futile queries. The third, as he opened his *Times*, his gaze was riveted, stupidly, on the words, "At St. Mark's, Battersea . . . Elias . . . to Edith . . . Graham . . . of Chislehurst."

For an hour he sat blankly staring at the wall, seeing only the shimmer of a haze of heat, which hung, like a bridge, linking a gray, leaden sea to a dull, yellow ocean of flaring buttercups—conscious only of one idea, that he had been the fool of a seaside hour, a play of shadow to lend consistency to the erotic drowsiness of a woman's dreamy awakening to the claims of another.

The soreness of the affront to his self-esteem urged him from the dull apathy of despair into a sullen resolve to woo oblivion. He attached himself to a wastrel of the clubs, a gentlemanly rook, penniless but ever convivially inclined, and moved by a subconscious

notion of keeping his name decent he booked passages for South Africa, the land, *par excellence*, of unburied shades.

II

ELIAS BARTON drew up his horse with a jerk. He had used his last match, and away on the veldt, to his right, was the glimmer of a fire. He off-saddled, and leaving his horse knee-haltered, walked in the direction of the light. When near it he suddenly stopped, arrested by the slight movement, beyond the glow, of a form which he had not before observed.

The form extended into the grotesque shape of a man, looming, blurred and indistinct, through a cloud of fine smoke. Approaching closer, Barton thought that the other looked about the most disreputable, drink-sodden wreck of humanity one could have picked from a hundred stores between East London and the Kei—though on that wan ocean, strange enough, are the derelicts one may pass in a day.

The man was cooking a bit of damper, in a dung-fire, squatting Kafir-fashion, some seventy yards off the track, as desolate an object as could be imagined. Beyond giving him a dull glare, he took no notice of Elias Barton's salutation, keeping his face fixed in his hands and moodily staring into the glowing embers before him.

His hair and beard were long and flecked heavily with gray. Probably he had once been good-looking, but his face now was heavy and bloated with that puffiness about the cheeks and eyes which told the tale of Africa's curse. He was powerfully made, being over six feet in height, and broad and burly in proportion. An old khaki shooting-jacket hung frayed and beltless about his back, his flannel shirt, open at the front, revealed a chest brawny, hairy and sunburnt to the polish of mahogany. His head was well shaped, his eyes set and gray, his nose thin at the bridge and widening

at the nostrils—a face indicative of strong passions, of emotions fretting on a worn curb.

Something of the spirit of his moodiness fell on Elias Barton, who stood vacantly eying him, wondering, in a curiously intent way, what manner of history, what pitiless destiny, had brought one so formed to such a wretched plight. The magnetic insistence of Barton's scrutiny at last irritated its object, who turned with fierce swiftness and snarled:

"What the hell do you want?"

As a rule, even Dutchmen, unless one be on foot, will try to be civil to a chance fellow-voyager on the veldt. Yet Elias was hardly conscious of surprise. He was a prey to a vague, yet keen feeling of interest, an inchoate intuition, a fret of incoherent forces, attracting and again repelling, through the undertow of which he felt half-defiantly impelled to invite the invasion of his destiny by that of the person in front of him.

"I have no fire," he said. "May I use yours?"

He overlooked the gruffness of the other's assent, and selecting a charred ember, lighted his pipe. Then, throwing himself on the veldt, he lay back, drew his hat over his eyes and looked out into the west.

The sun had gone down in a great sea of red foam that seemed to burst and scatter its coral-colored spray far over the amber fields of the sky, dappling the faint green of the mid-heaven as with a shower of falling peach-blossoms. Away to the east the veldt sloped suddenly, revealing the river winding its silver way through miles and countless miles of silent valley-land, which lay swathed in pearl-like mist, very restful, yet somewhat melancholy, too. That way the sky was dark, for in those climes the somber eyes of night blink with heavy lashes over the death-glows of the sun. Only in the west, the evening lights grew deeper and more slumberous, the flush creeping down from the mid-heaven to pause in breathless calm above the brooding fires on the

horizon. Here and there a star gleamed through the lambent paling of opalescent lakes, till little by little the light folded, like a sleepy flower, into a soft purple sheath of cloud, and night reigned over the shrinking reaches of the veldt.

Elias Barton, looking from the scene to the man, was startled by the sneering bitterness in his expression.

"What's up, man?" he said, bringing his hand down in a friendly smite. The man shot a glance, half-resentful, at him. For a moment he seemed about to speak, but he shut his lips with a snap, and turned away, to turn again and ask abruptly, "Have you any 'baccy?"

The farmer passed a fistful out of his jacket-pocket—the veldt pouch. The man transferred it, without remark, loaded his pipe, and kicked the fire into a blaze. He lay on his back, silently puffing out great clouds of smoke, and apparently disinclined to converse.

"Horse panned out?" chanced Elias Barton.

"I'm foot-slogging, looking for work!" The tone of the reply was bitter, and the laugh accompanying it harsh, as the man added shortly, "I'm a waster."

"Why?" asked Barton. He was a big, loose-built man, whose very stolidity of manner deprived his query of all impertinence.

"A woman—angel, and liar!" was the answer. In his voice was a note of that callous mock of misery which is the heritage of those alone who have learned to curse the thing they love. It forbade further questioning. Elias Barton's solemn face grew almost tender. He had been married some four years to a woman who adored him, a woman in whose grave beauty he had ever read nobility of soul and truth of emotion—one, he thought, for whose sake most men, having a like privilege, would have rendered reverent homage to her sex—a woman whose mere presence should be as an evangel to a man such as this. Moved by a generous impulse, he held out his hand.

"Your kind's not built for a waster,"

he said. "If you care to come to my place, I can find you a billet, and set you on your legs again. Anyone will tell you where to find Barton's farm."

"I will not come where there are womenfolk," said the man sullenly.

Barton laughed. "Well," he said, "you will have your wish there, for a time. For my wife and boy are in England."

He stood up, stretching himself. The stranger eyed him the while through narrowed lids.

"I will come," said the man, at last. "I will be at your place in three days' time."

III

BARTON'S PLACE, as the farmer's homestead was known for miles around, lay some thirty miles from Durban, toward the grazing flats of Eastern Pondoland. The house was better situated than most farm homesteads in those parts. Perched on the top of the plateau, in the rounded elbow of two craggy, verdure-smothered kopjes, the windows commanded a wide sweep of rolling plain. To the back, a gently sloping kloof, thick with thorn and yellow-wood, dipped to the blue, cool glint of the water, beyond which rose a tumbled vista of kopjes, retreating, swelling, purpling like the crested curve of wave piled on wave into the distant sky-line. On the left a tangle of thick scrub stood between the gable-end of the house and a flat stretch of upland that swept for some two miles westward, to drop sheerly to another sweep of plain a hundred feet beneath. The home paddocks tapered away from the right, wire-fenced glades, soft with the shade of scattered trees, rich with the lambent sheen of their English herbage. In sharp contrast was the sea of veldt, that girdled them with a shifting mirage of infinite hues—the gray, blistered rocks, the velvety loam, the parched glitter of springing grasses, alternating in endless rotation with the bronze silken gleams, the burnt-gold glows of the dying day.

The homestead itself presented something of the appearance of an old English country inn, dropped by a freak of chance among the scattered kraals of the savages. The house was long and low, its walls glistening white, showing here and there small latticed windows, diamond-paned, here and there glimpsing through a cluster of palm shrubs that dotted the verandas. It was roofed with reed-thatch, whose russet brown glowed like an overripe corn-field, lending a sense of brooding heaviness to the thick protruding eaves, an air of reluctant energy to the faint blue, lazy clouds of smoke that curled skyward from the red-brick chimney-stacks.

Toward the scrub rioted a luxurious wilderness of vines and plantations—palm and fig and sugar-apple; while flanking the house, and curving in a wide bay toward the paddocks, a great grove of oranges and lemons, with the yellow fruit gleaming through the dark polished leaves, made the air languorous with scent.

As Garth Repton, true to his word, sullenly toiled up the rutted track toward the house, its air of homeliness moved him to a sudden impulse to turn his back on it. But Barton had already sighted his chance companion of three nights ago, and before the mood had time to harden Repton was receiving from the farmer a welcome whose bluff heartiness dissipated his surly humor.

Barton, as befitted a son of Devon, was a genially-minded man, of simple instincts, and of the impassive habit of disregarding all that was not patently intelligible to others—a temperament which is often more effective and tolerable than the more aggressive sympathy of an intuitive nature. To the open sores of Repton's susceptibilities the clay-like stolidity of the farmer acted as soothingly, as healingly, as a plaster of earth acts on the wounded limb of a tree. The sap of his self-respect readjusted itself to new and more restrained channels; and at the end of three months of arduous and regular work Garth Repton began to

feel his own self again, though the change was perhaps more apparent physically than mentally.

Debauchery is something of a boomerang; it coils out from the body to recoil with all the force of its crooked circuit on the mind. Garth Repton had passed several years in the deliberate effort to stupefy the influences of every sensibility that thrilled to the maddening touch of memory. The intervention of Elias Barton had come at a moment when Repton was gloomily balancing the acrid flavor of the result against the cost of a dissipated capital, an impaired health, an implacable sullenness of temper.

If Barton had taken the trouble to show the sympathy he obscurely felt, Repton would have inevitably repulsed him. But something in the former's callous acceptance of him at the level at which he had placed himself touched some forgotten chord in the ex-barrister's sense of dry humor, moving him, on an irresponsible impulse, to follow where chance might lead.

But though his body, constitutionally strong, responded quickly to the wholesome influences of the new life, the very vigor of his health accentuated rather than modified the fever of his mind, the moroseness of his moods.

The eternal loneliness and limitations of the life were of themselves instinct with a stern temper of restraint, which lent to the spirit of brooding a responsive atmosphere. Nor did Elias Barton hit upon a happy method of awakening his new companion to a healthier state of thought. The farmer had a large and simple belief in womankind, and he steadily maintained the effort to convert Repton to the same by a sustained reiteration of the excellencies of Mrs. Barton. The long evenings invariably ended in some such panegyric, which drove the impotent man to a state of stifled rage.

The fret found vent in sleepless nights, which Repton began to dread. Little by little the spirit of his old hopeless passion, which, for a time, had lain dormant in the drugged current of his blood, began to reassert its domination.

To fight it he worked hard, rising with dawn, spending entire days in the saddle, visiting far into the night the outlying shepherd huts, striving by sheer stupor of fatigue to baffle the subtle suddenness of the trances that attacked him. But their power made mock of his strife. Night and day began to revolve round the phantom-presence of the woman whose image had enchained his destiny to the memory of a few delightful hours in a Kent garden.

In the breath of the night-wind he would thrill to the shadowy caress of her fingers floating over his cheeks; the perfume and shimmer of her hair mingled, with overpowering insistence, in the parched, keen scent of the bronze grasses; the very rise and fall of her bosom pulsed to his every breath, as the tingling half-sleep of exhaustion visited him in the gray, unreal hour that precedes the dawn.

He shrank, with bitter loathing, from any return to the cup of oblivion he had drained in vain for four years. With grim obstinacy he redoubled his labors, resenting almost savagely any intrusion on his solitude. For days he left the homestead, busying himself, unnecessarily, with stock and fencing in the outlying parts of the farmlands, ever returning to greet Barton's good-humored protests with a manner more sullenly reserved and intractable than before.

Ten months had passed thus, when, one morning, Barton came to him with the news that he was off to England to bring back his wife.

"She is pining for the veldt again," he said. "Ah, my boy, wait till you see her. She will soon convert you to kinder ideas of her sex. Meanwhile, I want you to boss the show for me till I return."

With Barton's absence Repton found himself, as it were, launched into a sudden calm. A great feeling of relief, of freedom, enveloped him, and he became subtly aware of an almost easy indifference to the tyrannous empire of his late moods. The fact urged him to an uneasy curiosity, which vaguely hovered round an idea, too incoherent

for definition, that, by some trick of coincidence, Barton ever stirred him to a troubled recollection, precise but evasive, of Edith Graham. He irritably ascribed it to the nightly chant of woman's praises to which he had so often been obliged to listen, and with a sneer at the absurdity of it he abandoned himself to the enjoyment of the three months of respite cheerfully projected.

Christmas had come and gone when, riding back one day from an outlying paddock, Repton was met, on the road to the homestead, by the farmer himself.

"Ah, my friend," laughed Barton, "we stole a march on you and posted up on the quiet. You must come in and see the wife. I told her you were here, and, strange to say, she thinks she met you, years ago, at some little village down in Kent."

Garth Repton felt his whole frame suddenly stiffen, and a curious gray muffling mist blotted out for the moment all sense of sound and sight. In a flash the truth came on him, and the explanation of that inexplicable connection that had linked the two together in his thought. Once, in looking for the first time on Barton's signature to a cheque, he had been occultly aware of a vague feeling that the name was familiar. But he attached no importance to it, lightly telling himself that it probably echoed to some obscure and forgotten chatter of the veldt. Now, as though the paper were before him, he could see the two names, "Elias . . . to Edith"; the staring black type of the letters, the dust along the sunbeam that had quivered athwart the sheet.

This, then, was the peerless woman, the devoted wife, the faultless type of femininity, whose perfections had for months been dinned into his ears. And her husband was his friend!

With a dull effort he braced himself to attention, and followed his host into the house, strangely conscious that his heart was pumping in queer, short jerks, that every nerve in his body seemed to be quivering like a fiber of fire-licked wire.

Edith Barton was awaiting them, standing in the long, shaded drawing-room. To Repton's eyes, dazzled by the transition from the glare, and blurred by the dread of his own emotions, she looked as cool, as grave, as royally, damnably beautiful as though not a day had passed over since she gazed that night, five years ago, over the moonlit waters of the Channel.

He almost laughed aloud in sheer self-derision as he noted how every detail of the newly opened room fitted round her, as instinct with the message of her identity as the glove cast on the table was still shaped like her hand. There was not an ornament, not a knick-knack in the room that did not clamor of her—the buxom shepherdesses, the immobility of the heavy amber-colored curtains, the passive voluptuousness of the classic engravings on the walls, the pensiveness that controlled throughout the prevailing tone of profusion.

She greeted him with all the graciousness and calm she might have extended to any old family friend. Her assurance staggered him, while something in the grave, half-tender gentleness of her regard smote at his heart with a sudden irresponsible suggestion as of promise. He murmured some platitude, to which she replied with a light laugh and, turning to her husband, hung caressingly on his arm, saying, "What a courtier your veldt-life makes of him!"

Into the half-shy railleury of her tone the fevered fiber of the man's brain read a note of challenge, delicately tuned to an echo of caution. His control shredded into a tangle of battling impulses. A faint overwhelming sickness of desire trembled through him, and in a blind instinct of self-defense his gaze quivered away from the woman. The tick of the clock throbbed through his brain. He felt as though Barton's eyes were on him, that the farmer was mockingly appreciating the naked history of his soul. It seemed minutes before he could stiffen his will to a glance that should repel suspicion. But when he looked up Barton, innocent of any intuition, was occupied in

killing a mosquito in the curtain. Repton's eyes wandered from the husband's back and, meeting the limpid regard of the wife, suddenly flashed on her, charged with all the rebellious question of a reckless passion. A fugitive, inscrutable smile fled over the woman's face, to give place to a swift, delicate flush. Then she turned abruptly and, throwing her arm round her husband's shoulder, drew him through the open window toward the veranda.

An oath hovered on Repton's lips; a suffocating tumult of jealousy, of longing, of impotence, surged in his throat, driving the blood to his eyes in a foam of red mist. He groped his way blindly out of the room and, seeking his own hut, sank upon a bench, fiercely gripping with his nails into the rough-hewn wood, his eyes hard, glittering, unseeing as glass marbles, staring into the glare of the sunlight.

IV

EDITH BARTON had for her husband a devotion so placidly self-assured that it practically dulled her senses to the mutter and the menace of the more turbulent passion that was brooding again on the horizon of her life. To some women love would seem to lend a sort of empyrical tenderness, a platonic yearning to let the effulgence of their own peace envelop others less happily disposed. The chance that had first thrown her in Repton's path had found her in the first blush of this beatific mood, and it was in all the unconsciousness of a sunbeam that she had drifted through the ripening fields of Repton's love. With the June night's harvest, however, there had come to her an unfeigned regret, the keenness of which, however, had been mellowed by the drift of years into a sort of motherly pity.

She was, indeed, of that serenely subjective temperament that is absolutely devoid of the intuition to divine the emotions which it creates in others.

In some elect and, happily, rare souls such a state arises from an exaltation of character essentially ethereal. But in her it was rather due to an easy and unconscious content in the exact balance of instinct that governed the delicate grossness of her nature—a balance that adjusted finely the placid claims of her spirit to her inert unconsciousness of the flesh. The casual sluggish character of Elias Barton comfortably and smoothly overlapped the grooves of her imagination, and, having once filled her mental perspective, his image effectually obscured her view to other presumptions.

On finding Repton at the farm her first emotion had been one of interest, somewhat constrained by shyness, yet fibered by just that reflective pose of sympathetic tenderness which he—being bound to live in the glamour of it—was inevitably designed to misconstrue. To see him daily suffering for her sake, thrilling to her touch, paling like a schoolboy at her glance, had for Mrs. Barton all the attraction of an exquisite pain, exciting her to a hundred postures and deprecatory moods, into the very muteness of which the man read a caress and a promise.

The strain began to tell upon him, urging him now to a state of morose brooding, now to fits of irresponsible gaiety.

One night, about a month after her arrival, the unusual levity of his erstwhile sulky manager attracted the attention of Barton.

"You quite inspire our friend here, Edith," he said to his wife. "As a rule, before you came it was as much as I could do to extract a grunt from him."

Repton was leaning against the veranda, his back to the starlight. The woman leveled on him a slow glance, half-afraid, half-admiring. He looked very handsome, and his talk had been tuned to that brilliant flippancy which sways women of sluggish wit with all the imperious charm of the unattainable. Barton had risen as he spoke, and stood tapping his boot with his whip.

"I must be off," he went on. "If the *Menky** were not coming to lunch tomorrow, I would wait till the morning. But I could not do the ride and the market between dawn and lunch. You will not feel so lonely, anyhow," he added to his wife, "with Repton in this mood."

She clung to his neck a moment, as he bade her good-bye, making him promise not to be later than midday in returning. As he rode past the windows he reined in and, standing in his stirrups, caught at the veranda rail.

"A last kiss!" he said.

She laughed—a little cooing, tender assent—and bending forward flung her arms round his neck.

When she rose, flushed and somewhat shy, she was struck by the pallor and rigidity of Repton's face, the dark despair in his eyes. Her husband was already round the corner of the building, and with an impulsive movement she laid her hand on the hands of the man and said softly: "Please do not look like that. Come inside, and I will play to you."

Repton restrained himself with a great effort. The touch of her hand, cool and soft, unmoved by a tremor of agitation, stirred him to a tumult of conflicting emotions. A hundred times during the past month he had sworn to himself that she loved him, and yet he had witnessed the warmth, the unnecessary warmth, of her caress to her husband. His longing struggled with a curse, the passion of his love with a mad force of hate, that swayed, inchoately, against her, her husband, himself.

"What is to be the end of it?" he asked abruptly, hoarsely, his fevered hand tightening on hers.

"The end?" she echoed, shrinking a little, yet ever with that light of mournful, half-wistful pity in her eyes. "I wish I knew. If only I could help you! But indeed I sometimes think it would be better, better for you, if you went away."

He looked at her somberly. Her words rang true; yet their very gentle-

* Resident magistrate.

ness seemed to give the lie to their import. She was standing opposite him, her form softly outlined against the shadows, her face faintly flushed, her eyes alight with a melting, half-remniscent glow, her breath a little quickened by the thrill and subconscious divination of the peril of the moment.

"I cannot leave you," Repton suddenly muttered, through set lips.

Before she could guess at his intention he stepped swiftly forward, his arms clasped her to him, and his lips crushed fiercely on hers.

For a moment, as if stunned, she lay passive in his embrace. Then, with all her force, she wrenched herself free and sank into a chair, her face buried in her hands.

"Oh, how could you, how could you!" she moaned. "And I was so sorry for you!"

He flung himself on his knees by her side, clasping her arms with tense, nervous hands.

"Edith!" he whispered fiercely, "I cannot live without you. Since you let me learn to love you, that June, down there in Kent, life has been a torture, a delirium. Now that I have found you again I will not go away—unless . . ."

She started up, facing him with flaming cheeks.

"You coward!" she cried. "I would sooner die. Go! Go! I shall never believe in you again; and never, never try to help you!"

Repton gazed at her, fascinated, quivering in every nerve, pale to the lips.

In a way, he suddenly comprehended that she was incomprehensible, and that he had made an irretrievable mistake. His eyes fluttered away from her, and with a harsh, short laugh, he swung on his heel and strode from the house, taking his way blindly over the silent veldt.

V

SOME two miles from the Barton homestead the uplands of the veldt

precipitously sheer by a great red kraanz into the river, which at this point bends in a deep sweep, embayed by two curved sandy tongues that run out into midstream.

Here, near the edge, lay Repton. On leaving Edith Barton the preceding evening he had walked straight on, till brought up suddenly by the precipice. He had cast himself on the veldt, abandoning himself to a sullen fury of resentment. The night and the morning wore away, but each hour girded him to a more somber resolve to wait and see if, after all, his mistake was irretrievable, if the future might not yield something of hope or of chance in gaining, yet, his will of this woman. The more he dwelt on the memory of her the less could he intelligibly satisfy himself that her words did not belie her thoughts. As though hypnotized by the persistent dominion of his own desire, he felt blankly incredulous to the fact that she could remain uninfluenced by it. With the callous savagery that ever lurks on the tyranny of one idea, he embraced the cynical conclusion that she was one of those women whose blood, filtering through an Eastern source, retained the temperament of the harem, the habit of subjection to the master of the hour; that, for her, the gage of passion was the mere chance of possession.

The undertow of his mind bore him, strenuously, into the full glare of a conscious hate against the man who, possessing her, deprived him of what his dizzied vision urged him to call his right. The force of his hate held him for a moment in the spell of an intense stillness, in which he realized that a shadow had crept in between him and the sun. He turned his head and looked up into the face of Elias Barton, who, with somber, menacing eyes, compressed lips and flushed cheeks, was gazing down at him.

There was no mistaking that regard: the woman had told him. For a few seconds Garth Repton lay blinking at him through narrowed lids, conscious of a strange sense of elasticity and power swelling into the inertness of his

body, of the sentient unglowing of that marble stillness that enveloped the tumult of passions at his heart.

"You cur!" said Barton at length. "I cannot flog you lying down. Get up!" And he kicked him slightly, as a man might kick a dog he wanted to move, but not to hurt.

For a moment the man lying there did not move. His eyes were fixed past Barton, and before his vision rose the picture of the woman, as he had seen her hanging round her husband's neck. . . . Then the fact that he had been kicked, and by the man who had stolen her, dawned on him, redly, through a surging mist of blood. Without a sound he gathered his limbs together and sprang at Barton's throat.

They were both big men, well matched in power and height. But the swiftness of the attack had taken Barton at a disadvantage, and in the unloosening of his rage Garth Repton had for the instant the force of three men. His grip had slipped from the throat to the belt of the other, and in the strength of his delirium he swung the farmer off his feet, into the air, and savagely, blindly, hurled him upward. For a second the figure of Elias Barton seemed to hang in the sunlight, a strange, sprawling blotch grotesquely outlined against the sky; the next his body had disappeared, vanishing beyond the edge of the kraanz, lancing through the blue, with a silent swiftness that caught the watching man at the throat with a sickening sense of suffocation. . . .

It was all so sudden, so silent, so unintentional in detail, though harmonious in spirit, that Garth Repton, swaying dizzily, threw out his hands, as if to thrust away the insistent picture of that swift-dropping blotch of black. For many minutes he stood stock-still, conscious only of listening to the brooding pulses of silence, of repelling the intolerable taunt of solitude that quivered in the palpitations of the heat-haze along the kraanz's edge.

Presently he became aware that, far in the blue distance, three or four

black specks were growing into shape. With a moan he cast himself down and dragged himself to the edge. On a spit of the river-bed, far beneath, he could distinguish a shapeless mass and the reddening of the spray that lapped it. From the depths the faint, murmurous plash of the river smote on the silence, like the rasping of a file.

He drew himself cautiously back and took a long look around. Not a soul was in sight, not a living thing seemed to disturb the level glare of the light, save that in the blue above the distant specks had multiplied into a motionless circle of wings. He looked at the grass at his feet; the long, bronzed, wiry herbage showed no trace of struggle. For some moments he rested, thinking. Then, with pale face and steps curiously furtive and careful, he made his way along the ridge, following the decline that led circuitously to the river. Once on the flat, he walked on till he sighted a kraal; then, making a detour, he approached it from the farther side. It was milking-time and the kraal was full of young men.

"M'Quaba," he said, addressing the head-man, "have any of your men been beer-drinking?"

The man shook his head, grinning.

"Why does the koos ask?" he said.

"I was in the wood there, some time ago," replied Repton, "and I saw a man walk over the kraanz up there."

"Wau!" ejaculated the man, following the direction of Repton's hand.

"Give me two men and we will go and see," said Repton.

They went, followed at a little distance by the whole kraal. Repton lead the way.

But when, three hours later, they bore all that was left of Elias Barton to his widow's house it was M'Quaba who told how they had found him. Repton, said he, had gone, at first glance, to seek a doctor.

VI

THREE years had passed since the death of Elias Barton, and his widow

was once again crossing the seas, to renew her life at the farm.

After the first shock, Mrs. Barton had returned to England with her son, leaving everything under Repton's management. Their interview had been cold, marked on either side by a strained avoidance of the topic that most filled their thoughts. During her absence the manager had outwardly led a life of solitude and hard work. If his moods were morose, his manner more sullen than formerly, none noticed it. To his neighbors he had ever been unapproachable, and the native hands did not concern themselves with his humors, save to avoid crossing them. And if it was remarked among them that the manager never entered the paddock adjoining the kraanz, the fact excited little comment, it being natural that he should shun the spot which had been so fatal to his friend.

His untiring energy, the latent menace that underlay his impassive silence, acted like a spell on the natives. They worked to his lightest nod, in a way that excited the wonder of his more experienced neighbors.

Crops and cattle multiplied. He used the surplus increase to buy up the grazing land toward the Pondo flats, and pushed the plowed land farther and farther north, till some three miles of rolling plain gleamed to the polish of sweating furrows or glowed with a yellow sea of mealies or oats.

Mrs. Barton, away in England, was beginning to scan with pride and growing amazement the quarterly reports of her manager. She was growing rich beyond her dreams, and the unwonted flow of money, if it did not console her for Elias's decease, left in her mind an embarrassing suspicion that he had not, during his life, treated her so generously as her devotion merited: a reflection which has probably helped to dissipate the dejection of many widows.

Edith Barton, indeed, had found life in England intolerably lonesome. The lamentations of friends fretted her into

a peevish consciousness that she was not so inconsolable as she ought to be. As the months rolled on, her heart turned, with an eagerness half-ashamed, to the thought of the man out on the veldt. The idea of his hopeless pain, of his long-suffering, changeless passion haunted her attractively. Absence invested the idea with the glamour of a poetic destiny; and the monotony of the ordered social life around her mellowed the insult of an undisciplined moment into the hues of a romantic memory.

To return, to console his long waiting, to be again the centre and the sun of one man's happiness, was a dream that appealed with growing allurements to that aptitude for self-caressing that a woman shares with a pigeon and a minor poet. The stress of it became clamorous; Mrs. Barton determined that her boy was pining for the veldt air, and booked her passage.

But though confronting the world with an inscrutable mask, Repton had passed a very evil time. From the first the sting of remorse had been keen, but time tempered its edge, though hardening, somewhat, the wound. He grew into a dull acceptance of his lot, resigning himself to the inevitable with a sort of passionless calm that surprised himself. He suffered most in his imagination, which, ever gloomy, became now the prey to a haunting presentment of that black blotch scrawling a grotesque figure against the light. It pursued him in his dreams, but most it tortured him athwart the noon-glare on the open veldt. He faced it grimly, fighting it as a sane and a strong man fights the force of a maniac. By degrees he obtained the mastery of it, so far, at least, as to face its sudden presentment without fear or shock.

He heard, almost without emotion, of Mrs. Barton's contemplated return. Beneath the burden of the specter that ever hovered near him his passion lay inert, sentient only in its weight of suffering. Yet when she at last arrived, and he stood face to face with her again, he was painfully conscious

of the old vivid quickening of his pulses, the nerve-vibration to which her presence had ever wrought him.

He was aware, too, of a subtle change in her, an effluence of her nature toward him which, in his fear of his secret, stung him to a sharp recoil under the force of which his greeting of her was marked by a stony indifference.

The widow felt the chill of it painfully. She had hardly pictured him with open arms and exultant, unashamed, eager eyes. But this man, with the hard, sour face, with eyes whose dull gleam, dead as the play of light on gray marble, had been instantly veiled in averted gaze, with a manner frigid, repelling—she felt not only disappointed, but angry and piqued. At first she had been inclined to resent it. But as the days went on she accepted it in that fine semblance of meekness which is part of the irresponsible instinct of cunning germane to the subconscious play of all female passion.

The days rolled into months, and her oblivious sweetness to his moods melted Repton's crest of reserve till, quite insensibly, he found himself wooing her with a fervor callously steeled against the prick of remorse. She made no pretense of withstanding his suit. It was arranged that they should be married quietly at Durban, and, after a wedding-trip, return to the farm.

The fact once settled, Repton seemed to change. The moments of moodiness that had intervened even during the short days of his wooing gave way to a state of repressed gaiety, an exultant fever of impatience that somewhat frightened the widow. But with his marriage he seemed to fall back suddenly into all the shy habits of reserve and reticence which had distinguished them in the first hour of their acquaintance. His manner was chastened by a sort of reluctance, whose delicate compliment stirred his wife to wonder vaguely what on earth she had ever seen to love in Barton. At first she was moved to misgivings lest the charm of this softened temper of his should prove fugitive, but be-

neath his constant, unobtrusive evidences of tenderness she was soon lulled into a gentle stupor of content. She never guessed that the dawn of their new life had made of the man's very capacity for passion a purgatorial fire; that his remorse, revitalized by the hour of his gain, rendered her every caress a torture of reproach, his opportunities of happiness a moral crucifixion. By some obscure channel of grace Repton had groped blindly to the grasp of a saving spirit of self-oblation. He set himself to bear the penalty unflinchingly, telling himself that the one atonement he could offer was to ensure the happiness of the dead man's wife and child.

VII

WITH their return to the farm, however, Mrs. Repton found a sense of gradual disillusion steal over the visions of an unbroken idyll. At first, indeed, she was inclined to smile benignly on her husband's devotion to her boy. The boy, moreover, was an irresistible urchin, square of shoulder, straight and supple as an ash sapling, with a tangle of yellow curls and the gray, deep eyes of his mother, and a mouth on every restless curve of which the spirit of mischief laughed unabashed. Repton quickly grew to love him and to lean upon him. In the companionship of the child, in the frank ingenuousness of his exigent demands, the man found a sanctuary wherein he would challenge and for a time defy the power of the torment that haunted him.

He maintained, meanwhile, all his old vigor in forwarding the prosperity of the farm. He had bluntly refused to take advantage of his wife's generous offers of a settlement, declaring that Barton's son should have Barton's wealth; that, for himself, his manager's salary was sufficient and all he would take. Mrs. Repton did not insist, and as the months rolled by without affording her any justification to realize her secret hopes, she did not venture to return to the subject. She

was, however, inclined to be a little fretful on more than one occasion, over his assiduity to the work and the boy, peevishly declaring at last that between the two she saw nothing of her husband. The intimation broke into the dreamy routine of Repton's life with all the disagreeable force of a rude awakening. He had hardly realized, till that moment, how far his daily thoughts, pushed implacably by the phantom of Elias Barton, had drifted from his wife. For a week he abandoned work, stayed at home, and devoted himself to Mrs. Repton.

The effect was disastrous to his peace of mind. He awoke to the terrifying fact that his old longing was dead, burnt out in the exhaustive fires of his penitence—and possession. He strenuously urged himself to fan the ashes of it, to stir his imagination to the old electric tingle that the mere thought of her had once inspired. But his nature made no response.

The accents of his tenderness rang spurious to his own ears. The gleam of his fugitive fervors had a meretricious glitter that sickened him.

The obviousness of the effort chafed the woman's instinct to an angry alarm. Her scant hope of a child to their union became a passion. In the stress of it, one languid afternoon, she confided her longings to her husband, with a tender belief that its efficacy would penetrate his mask of seeming coldness. It had not occurred to Repton till after his marriage that a child of his would simply perpetuate the image of his reproach. He had recoiled from the idea with the sense of physical anguish. When his wife invoked it as the blessing that would alone complete her happiness the fear, the shrinking, the positive aversion that for a moment darkened his face provoked a scene marked on the man's side by an acuteness of misery which verged to a show of impotent apathy—on the woman's by gentle weeping, an overt comparison in favor of the late Mr. Barton and an obscure inference that Mr. Repton's past had not been all it should have been.

Repton heard it all dumbly, powerless to speak a word of consolation, to offer the slightest sign of sympathy. He stood mute, spellbound, fascinated by the pitiless indrawing of the net in which his feet were taken. In face of his silence his wife, taking refuge in a disdainful dignity, swept out of the room.

He crossed over to the window, staring out of it, noting with exact minuteness the details of the landscape, the pulsing, parched quiver of the veldt beneath the brassy, implacable glare of the sun.

The sight of the young Elias racing toward the house affected him to a deep breath of relief. He responded gladly to the boy's eager beckonings, and joined him in the garden.

"M'Tanu has shown me an eagle's nest," called the boy. "There are young ones in it, and you must bring a rope and come and get me one at once."

The request echoed exactly to the man's mood—a climb and a spice of danger would come refreshingly after the experience of the last hour. He entered into the excitement of the child, and taking a couple of natives and a long coil of rope, he put himself cheerfully under Elias's guidance.

His game of counterfeit was destined to a rough shock when, after some half-hour's ride, the boy called a halt. Repton had paid no attention to the route they were following, but now he realized that he was standing within a few yards of the spot which had witnessed his dread struggle with Elias's father.

For a moment he was moved to a harsh refusal to pursue the project any further. But the boy's eyes were on him, and something in their vague scrutiny, as they regarded the somber working of his face, stirred him to a sudden show of composure. The boy's request, his very presence there, seemed to Repton to have the invincible force of a mandate of destiny. With a sudden convulsive shudder he abandoned himself to a spirit of reckless defiance.

He turned, smiling, to the boy, who, lying flat on the edge, was eagerly pointing out a ledge, some fifty feet down the face of the cliff, on which the nest was visible.

"Come away from there, little 'un," he said. "I'll get you the eaglets, so come right away and give your old man a hug."

"The eaglets first. The eaglets first!" shrilled the boy, dancing around him.

With a short laugh Repton turned to examine the best way of negotiating the descent.

The face of the cliff was easy enough, affording, with the aid of a rope, good footing among the scattered tufts of wiry grass and scrub. Repton had ever been a keen mountaineer, and having supervised the driving of a stout stake and the knotting of the rope around it, he let himself over the brow of the cliff and worked his way rapidly down. He secured two young birds and, tying them together by the legs to his belt, prepared to ascend. The sudden whir of wings and the harsh call of the mother bird caused him to turn swiftly. Above him, its wings outstretched, blotting the sky, the bird was swooping down. He gripped the rope and, awaiting his time, swung his knob-kerrie. The blow caught the bird full on the throat, breaking its neck.

For an instant it seemed to hover motionless; then, with a twitch, it lurched out into the blue and dropped plumb into the depths. As his eye followed it a great dizziness swept over him, and he hung staring out blankly into the shiver of the glare, his brow beaded with sweat, his limbs powerless, in the grip of a violent tremor that baffled all thought of control. He could see it still, that black blotch scrawling its ghastly outline against the sky, smiting into the terrible stillness of the glare the sullen, eternal boom of its menace. A great horror came over him, a sickening dread of the depths beneath, of the still, gray, watching wall above.

A sudden hail from the cliffs roused

him from the torpor, and with frenzied energy he began to haul himself up, swarming, monkey-like, by hands and knees, careless, in the terror of his own thoughts, that his feet might have sought a hold and a speedier passage along the steep slant of the rock.

Again the hail from above, this time sharp with a note of shrill dread! He looked up wildly, then paused, clawing deliriously, with his feet toward the cliff. But the cliff was now beyond the reach of his feet: and up above a great red mass of sandstone was verging slowly, and round about his face and down his neck and arms a rain of red earth was falling in an ever-sickening shower. He realized the truth in a lurid flash of vision. The late rains had loosened the brink—he could see vividly, now, as though he were actually gazing on it, the long cracked fissure ten feet beyond the spot where he had driven the stake; that, and the weight of his own body and of the natives on the edge, had been all that was needed to start the loosened bulk. He turned his face up to the sky and laughed aloud.

Inch by inch he watched the mass above growing into the air, through the red rain of earth. He could hear the splash of the pelting pebbles as they fell, a hundred feet below, into the water. A hundred feet! The thought flashed on him. The rope by which he hung was nearly that length. His teeth gritted together, a fierce, desperate light leaping into his eyes.

With both hands he began to work his way down through the pelting shower of earth. Hand under hand, in far-reaching, swaying spans he lunged down and down, his eyes, half-blinded, straining ever upward, toward the bulging, rending mass above, his ears greedily gathered in the growing volume of the river-fret along the stony bed. Another thirty feet, and he would be safe! His hand, swinging free for its grip beneath, suddenly sprawled faltering, clawing at the void. The rope had ended. His smarting eyes blinked hotly into the intervening space, and his breath

rasped roughly over his swollen tongue. One swing—and at the limit to let go! It would land him into midstream. His toes could just reach the bulging, smooth base of the cliff.

He pushed again, and once again, and, gaining impetus, on the third recoil he gathered in his limbs and drove himself out with all the force he could, and as his body lanced into mid-air he let go, turning his face upward for one last look as he dived feet foremost through the void. Even as he looked the red mass above him, with a tearing, rending roar, lurched bodily out between two lakes of blue and came hurling after him. He was conscious of a shrill hissing in the air, of something smiting him across the loins, of falling over and over into a bottomless rush of music and the white face of foaming waters. . . . Then a great black blotch grew across the light, and all perception melted suddenly into the darkness.

When he awoke he felt as though his brain had just been sponged. With a sense of acute distinctness he heard someone say: "It is hopeless. Prob-

ably he will not even recover consciousness, certainly not speech."

Then he saw Barton's wife standing near his bed, wringing her hands. He wondered vaguely what had happened: had he thrown Barton over the cliff or had Barton thrown him? He noticed that the woman's face was like chalk, and that she was talking in a faint, shrill whisper, without any tonal modulations.

"It is cruel," she said. "Why does God permit such things? To lose both like this! Oh, it is dreadful, dreadful! I am sure that I have never, never done anything to deserve it."

Garth Repton looked at her. His lips did not move, his tongue made no sound; but he thought he had said quite clearly: "Tell Barton not to worry. I forgive him. It was no one's fault, only the price of a seaside hour."

Then he suddenly felt tired and old, and drifted drowsily into sleep.

And so he paid to Barton's son the debt his destiny exacted.

For, after all, young Elias had the eaglets.



THE ROSE

By Archibald Sullivan

FOLD upon fold in close and royal red,
Chanted by birds and sanctified with dew,
Like some proud acolyte I stand and swing
My censer in God's chapel of the blue.

The surpliced lily leans within the choir
Silent—with sunset's halo on her head;
But I in velvet vestments stand and sing
Beneath God's stars my litany of red.

A SONG OF ARCADIA

By Beatrice St. George

ONCE, in groves Arcadian Lord Love and I went Maying,
Powdered sun-dust on the leaves, and south winds fresh and free,
And thro' the softly whispering woods, where lovers true were straying,
A fairy band of bright-eyed hopes danced onward merrily.

Lily-bells beneath our feet shook out a silvery laughter,
Glow and glitter of the sea, where sudden sails slipped by,
Cry of wood-doves, faint and low, came softly following after,
Adown the careless footsteps of the fair Lord Love and I.

Pulsing notes of forest life, the echoing heavens flooding,
Flutter, flutter, overhead, and shadow dance below,
On every spray the treasured wealth of Summer's storehouse budding,
While faint and far the breezes die in failing tremulo.

Love had twined a chaplet gay of bud and rose together,
Whisper, whisper, lovers true, and plight anew your vow,
Life was young and heaven near, and in the golden weather
Within the groves Arcadian that chaplet pressed my brow.

Braided grasses, dewy sweet, and wind-flowers lightly blowing,
Sun and shadow checkered fine across our happy way,
Love and I clasped hand in hand, with youth the pathway showing,
All in the groves of Arcady held carnival in May.

Love and Youth broke faith with me, left me lonely straying,
Oh, the groves of Arcady! adown the years they gleam,
Not with silver-banded hair shall Love and I go Maying,
Nor touch the hand of youth, save in the shadow of a dream.



THE SERIOUS OBSTACLE

WILLIS—Why don't you buy an automobile, Wallace? You're missing lots of fun. It's folly to say you can't afford to buy one.

WALLACE—Oh, I can afford to buy one all right, but I am too poor to run over people.

TWO FOOLISH VIRGINS

By Jean Elginbrod

“**R**OCK-A-BYE—,” sang Polly, with a tantalizing rising inflection, leaving the line unfinished, as she always did.

“Oh, Polly,” protested Miss Serena Wetherby, “I wouldn’t sing that again if I were you.”

Polly preened her pretty, green feathers and sputtered angrily to herself.

Miss Drusilla bit off her thread with a snap and threw the finished nankeen vest upon the chair beside her.

“I wonder just how hot it is here?” ventured Miss Serena timidly.

“About one hundred and ninety,” said Miss Drusilla, and began on another nankeen vest. One cannot afford to waste breath in talking when one is making buttonholes in nankeen vests at two and one-half cents a dozen.

“It’s pretty hot,” agreed Miss Serena, dragging her thread wearily out of the heavy cloth. She had grown strangely listless this hot weather. Was Summer always like this in the city? she wondered now, as she bent, round-shouldered, over her task. She had known thirty-four in her simple life, but they had been fresh, green, sweet Summers, with open windows letting in every fragrant, vagrant breeze, and orchards and fields all about as far as eye could see.

She was learning now that there were country Summers and city Summers, and that they were very different. This was a city Summer. She was so worn with the noise and heat that she could scarcely remember why they were there, sewing hour after hour in that close, dirty flat of three rooms, seven flights up.

There had been a small legacy left to her and Drusilla, and they had had a sudden longing for city life with its novelty, its crowds, its art galleries, its concerts. Living in a city must be like living in a fairy-tale. They were country born and bred. She had never been out of Swampscott more than three or four times in all her life. She and her sister Drusilla, left alone in the world, weighed the question of moving very carefully. By renting the old home and living modestly they could do it, Drusilla thought. So they had rented the farmhouse and were living modestly, extremely modestly. But they were sewing nankeen vests at two and one-half cents a dozen to keep out of debt, and their quarterly dividend was a month overdue. It frightened Serena to think of it.

Everything was so very dear, also, and every single thing had to be bought. There was no little garden to run out to here. It seemed unreal to buy potatoes, and wood—potatoes by the quart, and wood in funny little bundles. They bought butter by the quarter or half-pound, for they could not afford ice very often, and they had no place to keep it. They were careful not to buy the best, because one did not use so much of it when it was of poorer quality, and it lasted longer. They bought coal by the bag—fifteen cents for a big bag—and it really lasted quite a while. Of course they would have to buy it differently when Winter came. Miss Serena pricked her finger and sighed. What should they do when Winter came if the dividend did not? They had had a letter about it, but it was so full of technical terms that she

did not understand it, and she was fairly sure that Drusilla did not, though she would not own up to it. How could they go crawling back with a few paltry excuses, when they had talked so enthusiastically about city life? No indeed! Drusilla would die first, and so would she. "Bachelor" Bean, who owned the farm next to them, had predicted that they would be back in less than a month. They had been gone six months now. That showed how much a man knew about it. But then he had been a sailor for years and years and could not be expected to know much about women-folks. Of course he had traveled so much he was quite content now to settle down and farm for the rest of his life. He had not lived thirty-four years in one place as she had. Miss Serena grew pink. Of course they could not go back.

She sighed again. How noisy those children were! There were over thirty in the block, and they must all be playing on the stairs. She could hear Bub O'Flaherty's voice above all the others. What awful voices all those O'Flaherty children had! He was "counting out":

"Inty, minty, fibity, gig,
Delia, dalia, domin, ig,
Hichi, kichi, domin, nicha,
Han, pan, tusk,
Ogo, bogo, boo,
Out goes y-o-u."

Evidently the decision did not suit. There was a fight. She could hear the blows.

She counted the vests she had finished. Drusilla had done almost twice as many. She bent over her task doggedly, and tried to forget that it was Summer, that somewhere—she knew where—there were fresh, cool breezes and long, lush grass and a brook that rippled and sang all through the beautiful days and nights.

They had been foolish, foolish. Ah, yes, she knew it now. If Drusilla knew it she did not admit it. Drusilla was like a rock from their own hillside pasture. She was ten years older than Serena and her word had been her younger sister's law for more years than either could remember. Perhaps

if it had not been for Drusilla's chill aloofness, "Bachelor" Bean, their new neighbor, would have been more neighborly. He was such a nice man. Serena blushed to think how easy it was to think of him by the nickname, "Bachelor," that she had given him. He was so plainly afraid of women; as shy as a girl when one spoke to him. He ought to get married. That sister of his did not make him half comfortable. She was a slack thing, Serena was sure of it.

"You'd better put on your hat and go out for some milk," said Miss Drusilla suddenly.

"There's condensed left," said Miss Serena, surprised.

"I don't care if there is. I can't abide that warm, sickish stuff in this hot weather. Get some real milk just off the ice and we'll make up for it some other way."

Miss Serena put away her work. She knew it was Drusilla's way to get her out of doors for a rest and a change, but she was too weary, too thankful to go to protest. She brushed her hair back into a firm little coil and let down the sleeves of her gingham dress. Miss Serena had pretty arms, but she would never have dreamed of wearing them uncovered, even to the elbow, on the street. She went down the six long flights of stairs, slowly, warily. There were steps loose and the wooden stair rail was not dependable. It was a dirty wooden block in a small dirty court, and Serena had to pick her way over cans and other refuse to the street.

The homesickness that she had been fighting all day grew stronger as she returned and entered the dark, narrow hall. Oh, to be home, to be sitting on the big stone step at the front door, watching the stars come out, to smell the fresh earth and the syringa blossoms in Mr. Bean's garden! They had shut themselves out of Paradise, two poor, foolish old maids. They had lost all and gained nothing. She smiled a little, remembering the parks they were to visit, the art galleries they were to see, the wonderful concerts they were to hear. They had not been to any-

thing yet. She had lost all hope of ever going, now.

As they ate supper in the pale light of the street lamp—to save oil, and for coolness's sake—she had half a mind to beg Drusilla to go back. Then her heart failed her. Old Mrs. Henry's sarcastic voice—she could hear it now. Mrs. Henry kept the Creamery. She would surely say unkind things, and how everybody would ask questions, and what could they answer!

Serena drank her milk in heavy silence. Drusilla sewed until nearly midnight, but Serena went into the cupboard that was called a bedroom by the rent agents and cried herself to sleep. For weeks she had worked as steadily, as fiercely, as Drusilla, but she had not Drusilla's strength nor endurance. She was heartsick and exhausted. She almost wished she were dead.

The days grew hotter and hotter. The thermometer crept up and up, and the sun beat in upon them as they sewed, and the heavy purple malaria fog crept up to them from the heated court as they slept. Miss Drusilla shut her lips together like some Gorgon and complained never a word, although she slept little and ate less, and her angular shoulder-blades stuck out, big and forbidding in her ugly calico dress.

Poor Polly sang no more. They hung her in the shadiest window and kept damp cloths upon her cage, but she, too, was country bred, and pined for the cool, quiet grape-arbor in which she had hung so many Summers.

At last the worm turned. Serena, sewing like some pale ghost, had an inspiration. She wondered whether she dared. She stole a glance at Drusilla. The more she thought about it the greater her longing grew. She would, she must!—and at last she spoke.

"I'm not going to sew all day tomorrow, Drusilla," she declared flatly, and waited for something to happen. Nothing happened. A peculiar expression swept over Drusilla's tired, grim face, but she said never a word. Serena took courage, and told her first big lie.

"I think I'll go over the river to the west side and see that park they rave so about. It was the first thing we were going to see, when we came, and we haven't seen it yet. I can walk, and take some bread for lunch and come back after it gets cool, in the evening. I'm not afraid. I ain't a-going to sew tomorrow, if we starve. Don't you want to go, Drusilla?"

Then she waited, in terror, for fear she would say "Yes."

Still nothing happened.

"It'll do you good," snapped Drusilla. "I'll go some other day. Go on."

She couldn't help snapping. Some people are born with Roman noses, some with hare-lips, some with cross eyes. Miss Drusilla was born with a snap in her voice, and it grew more snappy as she grew older. Worry had certainly not improved it any. Miss Serena had got used to it, so that she really didn't mind it except when she was very tired. Now she did not even notice it. The suddenness of Miss Drusilla's approval almost made her faint.

"Yes," she stammered, "I'll go real early before it gets so hot."

She was surprised to find how easy it was to scheme and lie, even to one nearest and dearest. She felt guilty. She imagined she felt as a bank robber or murderer must the day after his crime as she made her two poor little sandwiches the next morning.

Drusilla was evidently asleep. She did not stir as Serena tiptoed about. Serena could not bear to waken her, she looked so worn, so she wrote a note and put it upon the table. Then she went out quietly and down the long, unreliable stairs.

Hucksters and milkmen were the only people about. It was very early. The sun was just showing his red face above the chimney-tops. Serena shook her fist at him.

"You, you old heathen," she said.

Then she settled down into a steady pace. It was a long journey that she was taking. If Miss Drusilla had guessed how long it was—! Serena half counted on a lift from some good-

natured farmer, but no one seemed to be going her way.

She tramped steadily on and on. It was country now. Dust lay heavy on the bushes by the roadside, but she could see trees and grass, and hear, now and then, a bird, hidden away in the underbrush. How could people who didn't have to ever live in the city? Wasn't God's world good enough?

She was growing very tired. She stopped under a big tree and ate one of her sandwiches. It was good, and she started again with renewed courage.

A team was coming behind her, but she did not turn around. "Bachelor" Bean, an even earlier riser than she, driving home from the city market, called to her suddenly and pulled up his horse.

"Why, Miss Serena, is that you?"

Miss Serena, startled, wheeled around as though she had been struck. A slow flush crept over her pale face.

"Good morning, Bache—Mr. Bean. Yes, it's me."

"Well, where you going? Want a lift?"

Serena hesitated painfully. She would have to tell him, and what would he think! Then all of a sudden she did not care what anyone thought.

"I'm walking back home, just to see the place. I'm homesick," she said doggedly.

After a minute "Bachelor" Bean smiled. He did not say "I told you so," however. He just got down and helped Miss Serena up on to the high seat without a word.

"I'm going home around by the river road, but you won't care?"

Serena shook her head. She was past caring for much of anything, and it was so good to be taken care of. Away from Drusilla's wing some of her natural humor and quaintness crept out. He had known it was there, ah, yes, but she had hidden it so carefully, and Miss Drusilla had awed him so thoroughly.

Little by little the whole tale unfolded. He could see it all, their pride, their worry, their sensitiveness.

He laughed as she told him of her duplicity, but his eyes were wet.

"And just think," Serena went on. "Drusilla never complained a word, and I've left her alone sewing, all this awful day. I'm a degenerate, I know I am. Just see how I've lied to her. I'm afraid there's something awful wrong with me. I don't think there was until we went there to live. I wouldn't have told a lie to save my soul, before that. It's the work and the worry and the heat. I just got desperate. I know now why city people are so bad. Everything is so crowded and cramped outside of them that they just get all cramped and out of shape inside, in their souls. There isn't room for them to be good in."

"Bachelor" Bean laughed.

"You poor child!" he said. "And yet you are going back there."

"I must. We've got there, and we will have to stay there for all that I see. Oh, but I hate it. I hate it!"

"Then stay here with me. I guess I need you as much as Miss Drusilla does."

So suddenly it came that Serena hardly grasped it at first.

Finding how easy it was, after all, "Bachelor" Bean drew a long breath and plunged in.

"Drusilla would be contented, if she once got back here, now she's had a taste of city life and finds it ain't so nice as it looks, always. She could live with us, if she wanted to. I'm willing. And it's where you belong, in God's country. You were never meant for the city. It will kill you. I ain't much but a blundering old sailor. I don't know much about women, but when I saw you the first day I bought the farm there, a year ago—you remember it, maybe. You were feeding the chickens out there in the yard, and you had on a pink sun-bonnet. Well, I just thought you was the prettiest girl! I've thought about you a lot since, and I love you, Serena. Do you think you could—marry me?"

The river road was quite deserted, and the wind blew in from the water, cool and fresh and sweet. Miss Serena's

cheeks grew pink as he kissed her. A soft strand of her light hair escaped from its trim band and lay across his shoulder. With a sudden tenderness he kissed it as he put it back. Miss Serena laughed.

"It's time we were foolish," said "Bachelor" Bean composedly. "We've been sensible long enough. You can run in and look at your old home. I guess the folks are away today. Mrs. Day has taken her children and gone over to her mother's on East street, but they keep the key in the same place that you did, so you can get in all right. Then you come over to my house. Mary will have dinner ready by that time. And after it gets cooler, long toward evening I'll drive you back and break the news to Drusilla. I've gotten all over being afraid of her snap, somehow. After that's over we'll settle the moving-back question. And then— Well, how does all that suit you?"

Serena nodded. She was beyond speech.

He lifted her down at the top of the hill, and she took the path through the fields to the old house. It was nearly noon. They had been the longest way round. Her eyes grew soft as she thought about it. He was a good man.

The door was unlocked, after all. She wondered whether Mrs. Day had come home. There was no sign of anyone about. She turned the knob softly and stepped into the kitchen. Her heart gave a great leap. It was home, *home!* If Drusilla would only not make a fuss, if she would only come back as gladly as she was coming! She sighed. Drusilla was hard to turn when her mind was made up.

She stepped softly about. She looked out of the little side window. She could just see the tall chimney of "Bachelor" Bean's house through the trees. The fragrance of syringa blos-

soms floated in and she shut her eyes and drew a long breath. It suddenly seemed the most natural thing in the world to marry "Bachelor" Bean and go to live in that other house.

Then she crossed the little hall and stopped stone-still in the doorway of the sitting-room. Drusilla sat in the big rocker by the open window. Their eyes met in a startled silence.

"Drusilla!"

"Serena!"

Miss Drusilla's face flushed a slow, heavy scarlet.

"I had to come," she snapped. "I've planned it for a week. You went away, so it gave me a good chance. I got a ride from a milkman part of the way. I've been here two hours, I guess, and it's like heaven."

"Oh!" said Serena, and sat down on the haircloth sofa and laughed weakly.

"What are you doing here?" snapped Miss Drusilla. "I thought you were to be gone all day. How did you know I was here, anyway?"

"I didn't," said Serena. "I didn't know you were here at all. I just came because I was homesick enough to die. I never intended to go to the park at all."

They stared at each other for a moment.

"Two old fools," snapped Miss Drusilla suddenly. "And I'm the worst one. Let's move back."

"Let's," echoed Serena faintly. "And—I think—'Bachelor' Bean would like to marry me. He says so—he drove me part way here—if you don't mind—please."

There was a heavy silence.

Then Miss Drusilla's mouth relaxed and she smiled grimly.

"I don't care," she said, and she didn't snap. "I don't care about anything, if we only get back to God's country."



THE EDGE OF THE WOOD

By Katharine Metcalf Roof

AS I stood on the edge of the wood it seemed to me that I had seen it before—or it may have been that the wood itself had that atmosphere of unreality that belongs to the thing seen in dreams or recalled from the remoteness of early childhood. Its greenness was like sunlight through an emerald. The tree-trunks were covered with a fine green mold; the atmosphere itself was green, subdued, yet luminous. It was not overgrown, yet it seemed forgotten. I had an impression not so much of age as of arrestment, enchantment.

There has always been within me a deep and abiding sense of kinship with the earth, the sea and the open sky, and most of all, perhaps, with the deep woods; and as I stepped into the still, green world of the king's forest, a curious experience of my childhood came back to me. On that far-away day I had been playing by myself on the edge of a wood and had thrown myself down for a moment under a tree. I had been staring up into the network of green leaves overhead—an occupation which has always had a peculiar fascination for me—when something impelled me to look in the direction of a great tree a few paces away, and there, squatting on the ground I saw a strange creature watching me—a brown creature the size of a half-grown boy; afterward I felt sure that he had ears like an animal and that his legs were covered with curly brown hair. He was regarding me curiously, yet his look was not unfriendly, and as I stared back, wondering, he started to run toward me. Moved by some childish fear born of nurses' tales, I jumped up and ran away from him; yet I remember some impulse of compunction made me look back, and I saw the brown creature standing

there on the edge of the wood, watching me. On his face was a puzzled, disappointed look that gave me the pang of having repulsed an animal's friendly confidence.

I went often afterward to the wood, but I never saw the brown creature again. Yet the memory has stayed with me like the glimpse of some half-hidden path chanced upon in the deep woods, wondered over, yet passed by unexplored.

For some reason the little episode came back to me as I walked on in the green light of the king's forgotten wood. It was not, as I have said, a wild wood; it had once been part of the palace garden.

I came presently upon a stone seat with a carved back, mottled green and brown with the wood mold, and sat down to rest. Opposite me was a laughing head of Pan standing upon a half-ruined marble pedestal, the leaf shadows playing across his discolored face; and beyond, through the trees, I caught a glimpse of a marble Psyche that had somehow preserved a greater whiteness. As I sat there images of princes and courtiers in lincoln green, blowing their hunting-bugles, mingled in my mind with dimmer fancies of wood gods and dryads. Then suddenly a strong desire to explore the whole of the wood came over me and I arose and wandered on.

A little farther on I came upon a long pool of still, green water holding, as in a mirror, the reflection of a stone water-nymph with down-bent head. She was as green with the water slime as the trunks of the trees. Beyond, from the increasing lightness, I foresaw the end of the wood, and as I walked on, detected the shimmer of water between the leaves. It proved to be

a little lake; its banks were thick with rushes through which the wind whispered mysteriously, and in their midst reclined a marble Triton, half-green, like the other gods, with the soft velvet of the woods.

I cannot pretend to analyze the feeling that came over me in that spot. It was almost like a loss of identity, yet I was intensely conscious. I was myself, yet a part of all life. I felt the gods of Greece and all the dreams of the earth's children about me. The very air was full of life; there was consciousness in the movement and sound of the rushes in the wind, in the ripples blowing over the surface of the water.

I threw myself down on the grass by the edge of the lake and fell into a dream that was like sleep, yet was vividly awake. I do not know how long I had been lying there when the sensation of someone's eyes upon me drew mine in the direction of the reclining Triton. Then I saw a young girl standing among the rushes. Her garments were scant and light about her and of an uncertain green-brown color. Her face was very brown and her eyes curiously bright. She continued to watch me silently for some minutes; then she moved and laughed softly and came toward me. Instinctively I remained motionless as if she were a bird or some inquisitive wild animal. She approached until she was close to me, then tentatively she put out her hand and touched my arm. As she felt wonderingly along my coat-sleeve I fancied that a little shadow of apprehension slipped into her eyes. Then she reached up and touched my hair, and that contact seemed to reassure her, for she smiled and sat down on the grass beside me. I noticed a perfume like ferns about her.

"Do you live here?" I asked her.

She nodded. "Do you?"

"Near here," I told her.

"Not in the wood," she said.

"Not in the wood, but not far away, in the forester's lodge," I explained.

But she laughed softly as one who knew more than I could tell. "You

have never been in the wood before today!" she cried.

"How do you know?" I asked her.

She nodded again wisely. "I know—I know everything that is in the wood."

As I looked in her eyes it occurred to me that they were like the depths of the still pool and they gave me a strange sense of past forms that had been reflected in them like an enchanted mirror. I heard the sounds of the insects in the grass, and the rustle of the wind in the rushes. From within the depths of the wood came the subdued afternoon twitter of the birds.

"I want to stay in the wood forever—forever," I said. "Never to go back."

She looked at me wonderingly. "What is it to go back?"

"You have never been out of the wood," I divined.

She shook her head and laughed noiselessly. I guessed that she did not know of any other world than the wood.

"But in the Winter," I began, "when the woods are white——"

She stared at me wonderingly.

"The woods are never white," she said. "There is nothing white except the flowers. The leaves fall and the woods grow brown and cold and then you are sleepy, and then you wake and the leaves are growing again, and flowers come up out of the earth."

"You lie down on the earth like this," I murmured, "and it takes you in its arms, and the sky and the trees fade away and all is still—everything stops—" I roused myself with a start. "Why, that is death!" I exclaimed.

She shook her head again slowly and wisely. "There is no death except for the birds and the little fur brothers. We do not die." Then she moved closer to me and whispered in my ear: "Do not go back. Stay with me in the wood."

"And we would live in the wood always," I murmured.

"In the wood and the water," she answered. "All the world is ours."

"We will live in the woods forever," I

heard myself saying. "We will play and sleep and wake again."

I sat up suddenly to prove that I was not dreaming, and walked away from her. Presently, turning, I found that she had followed me noiselessly, anxiously. Then I remembered the look in the wood creature's eyes.

"I will stay this time," I said. I took her hand and drew her toward me. It was warm flesh that I touched, yet it gave me an odd sense of handling flowers. "You will not run away," I asked, "and leave me alone in the wood?"

"Are you afraid?" she questioned. She started to draw back her hand.

"Only afraid of losing you."

"I am always here," she replied.

"I will stay," I said again. Then, like the soft surprise of a Summer-scented wind I found her in my arms. I drew her face to mine.

It was like nothing in the world outside the wood—that kiss: as one drinks the breath of wild flowers, like the taste of the rain and the drugged honey of noonday—but it was not like the kiss of any mortal woman. The world and the wood seemed to fade away and become mist.

The next thing that I remember we were standing upon the edge of the lake beside the marble Triton. One of her brown hands was on the god's shoulder; the other she was holding out to me; in it was a small white flower. As I took it I lifted it to my face. It had a faint, indescribable perfume; again the world about me seemed to dissolve into mist, and through it I heard her voice . . . "Come——"

Then I felt her hand—both hands, both arms around me, closing about me, drawing me down, down, into the lake. In a green veil it shut down over me. I had not dreamed the water was so deep.

I opened my eyes to see a sunset sky overhead and the face of the forester bending over me. I was lying upon the bank of the lake. I struggled to rise upon my elbow and look about.

Beside me still reclined the marble

Triton, and the rushes were still whispering their inscrutable secrets. Memory rushed back over me. "She is gone!" I cried.

I saw that the forester stared at me curiously, then his face became vague. I sank back again on the grass. "How did it happen?" I asked.

The forester looked at me queerly. "You can tell that better than I."

I lay there weakly, wondering. It must have been that I had fallen asleep and somehow walked into the water, although I had never, to my knowledge, walked in my sleep.

But the beautiful brown maiden . . . I had dreamed her. A pang of loss struck through me. My mind began going over it all. Then I became conscious that, after the manner of the man suddenly thrown overboard, I was holding something tightly clasped in my hand. I opened my fingers—it was a small white flower. Instinctively I raised it to my face. . . .

I roused myself with an effort. "Does anyone live in the wood?" I asked.

The forester, with a decreasing interest in me now that my safety was assured, shook his head.

I went home slowly through the green wood. The late sunlight was golden in the leaves, but close to the ground the twilight was gathering. A great silence seemed to have settled over everything. I fancied that the water-nymph voluntarily refrained from looking up as I passed, and that the god Pan smiled strangely.

I never found her again, my brown maiden, but I can shut my eyes and see her now, and feel again that kiss that was of the wild flowers and the rain, and the spicy bark of birches, and the hot honey of flowers at noonday, but was not like the kiss of any mortal woman. And the dear human woman that I may love some day need not fear that memory, for it was not the love of mortal woman, but the miracle of the warm earth itself, out of which I was born, and to which I shall return again at the last.

INDIAN SUMMER

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

“PUTTING a good deal of confidence in the weather, aren't you, Lavinia? Middle-aged parties like you and me should beware of pneumonia.”

It was Indian Summer—that elusive, halcyon season when New England Autumn halts its progress for a few days and mocks all living things with fleeting warmth and sunshine before ushering in a protracted period of desolation. Miss Lavinia Merrill sat on the veranda of her home in Ware, enjoying the clemency of the afternoon. There was a novel in her lap, but she was not reading; neither did she sew, though an unfinished piece of embroidery called to her from the small table by her side, where she had placed it with a vague idea of taking it up a little later. The occupation which held her was one that could have been named day-dreaming if indulged in by a person a trifle younger or much more aged, and so enthralling was it that Mrs. Hepburn, had she not been minded to speak, might have achieved the whole distance between the front gate and the steps without attracting attention.

“The lungs at next door to forty are not as dependable as they were at sweet sixteen,” the visitor continued, raising a foot ponderously toward the lower step.

Barring a slight huskiness induced by exercise, there was nothing the matter with Mrs. Hepburn's own lungs. The voice which emanated from them was that of a Fourth-of-July speaker—weighty and orotund. The lady's manners also tended in the direction of the masculine, but by reason of abruptness rather than formality.

Miss Merrill laughed and drew forward a rocker. “Come up and compose yourself, Fanny. There are no draughts in this corner, and a bit of fresh air won't hurt you.”

The other, having ascended with labor, sank obediently into the chair, which creaked.

“I hope,” she observed, “that your furniture is strong. A chair went down under me at Mary Mapleson's bridge the other night. It was one of those little gilded horrors, and I told Mary that the accident was all her fault for giving such a thing house-room. But really, my weight is getting to be something enormous. A hundred and eighty-three! Andrew Hepburn's a regular Job's comforter. He says if I persevere I may be able to enter the two hundred class. Lavinia, you ought to thank heaven that you're thin. . . . I didn't come here to talk anti-fat, though; I came to find out whether you're going to the business meeting of the Children's Aid Society tonight. Several important questions are coming up for discussion, and we need all the votes of the right kind that we can get.”

“I hadn't thought of going,” Miss Merrill said. “Somehow, I don't seem to feel as much interest in the Children's Aid Society as I did once. I'm afraid my charitable instincts are rather capricious. Mother used to say that I had no real charity of the soul. I dare say she was right.”

“Huh!” ejaculated Mrs. Hepburn scornfully. “Your mother was a fine person to cavil at your charity! Goodness knows, she profited enough by it. Why, because of your charity to her,

you never had any girlhood at all. The best twenty years of your life were consumed in waiting on her—in changing the pillows and carrying hot-water bottles. You never grudged her the service. 'No charity of the soul,' indeed!"

"I am afraid," Miss Merrill rejoined quietly, "that whatever I thought of the service then, I grudge it now. Of course, if I were put in the same position again, I should probably do the same thing. But I question, nevertheless, whether I was right in sacrificing my whole time to her. A great deal is said and written about the injustices done by the young to the old, but there's quite as much that might be said on the other side. Mother would have been just as comfortable in the care of a trained nurse—and far more happy, I believe, for she would have learned to get along with fewer complaints. She would have gained courage by self-denial, and I should have had some of the happiness that belonged to me. I grudge the loss of that happiness. So you see I'm really selfish, and not charitable at all, according to recognized standards."

Mrs. Hepburn stared. "Something has come over you, Lavinia. You wouldn't have talked like that a year ago. Then you'd have shuddered at the mere suggestion that your mother's death was for the best. Your notions have shifted considerably of late."

"Do you think so? Well, I suppose one inevitably shifts one's point of view after getting out of a rut that has lasted practically all one's life."

"No, one generally scrapes out a continuation of the rut from sheer force of habit. Besides, your mother has been dead more than three years now, so the difference in you can't be laid to that. I'll tell you what I think: I think you're growing younger instead of older. Do you know you're looking actually beautiful today? You always were distinguished-looking, but your expression has changed. My boy Charley—he's in the poetic stage, you know—my boy Charley would say that the backward bud has blossomed into

a glorious rose. I'm not much given to extravagance myself, but I must say that you don't look a minute over twenty-eight."

"No? I was thirty-seven last Tuesday. Rather mature for a blossom, Fanny."

"I repeat," said Mrs. Hepburn, "that you don't look a minute over twenty-eight." She paused for a moment, blinking fat eyelids over shrewd, but not unkindly eyes. "I'm going to give you a warning, Lavinia, and you can take it or leave it, as you like. People are talking about you."

Miss Merrill laughed a second time. "People in a college town spend a large proportion of their time talking about other people, and I can't hope for immunity. What are they saying just at present?"

"They're saying that you're in love with your protégé, the young artist," her friend answered bluntly.

For some seconds Miss Merrill made no comment. She was looking down at her hands, and seemed to be studying them intently. They were fine hands—so fine that she did not care to wear rings. She lifted the long, slender fingers, one by one. When at length she glanced up she was smiling.

"I hope," she said, "that people at least have justice enough to admit that my protégé has done well."

"Why, yes. There seems to be no doubt on that score. Even I can see he has talent. When Charley dragged me to the graduation exercises of the Art School last June I saw some of your young man's daubs that were actually interesting! Coming from me, that's a great compliment, for I can't endure modern paintings. I always have to be told whether they're meant to represent a man walking over a muddy road at dawn or a boat in a river at sunset. . . . Yes, the fellow has done well enough. But why couldn't you have furnished him with the money for his course, and let it go at that? There was no need of your taking him up socially. He was a frightfully raw article when you began."

"No wonder—considering his par-

entage and early life. And do you think that the mere payment of his tuition at the Art School would have given him much polish?"

"Oh, I don't know. If you give a boy funds for an education, he usually manages to pick up culture by himself; it's in the atmosphere here at Ware."

"That is Ware's fond belief," Miss Merrill countered. "Personally, I have my doubts about the efficacy of the atmospheric treatment. I was brought up with the prevalent ideas anent poverty-stricken students; mother helped several of them through college, and for years and years one or another of the ilk had the job of caring for our furnace and clearing the snow from our sidewalk, but it would have been Anathema to suggest dining any of them at our table. Mother erected a social wall between herself and the objects of her charity—just as she built a moral one between Christians and the Benighted Heathen toward whose conversion she contributed so liberally. Those poor students were very worthy persons, but I never observed any extraordinary development of culture in them. They didn't seem to drink it in with the air. So, when I undertook to assist one of their successors I determined to adopt a different method. I'm not recommending my method for general practice; I merely call attention to the fact that you yourself admit its success in this instance."

"I never questioned its success, so far as the boy was concerned," said Mrs. Hepburn. "That male would have to be more than ordinarily barbarous who failed to be benefited by your company, Lavinia. What I question—and others also—is the result of the scheme on you."

Miss Merrill raised her brows in mild amusement. "It's very kind of you and the others. Really, though, I can't see how that part of it affects anyone but me."

"Oh, yes, you can," the fat woman returned, with a comfortable chuckle. "You're simply stubborn. I've always given you credit for latent ob-

stinacy. You know perfectly well that your friends will mourn, and the Philistines gloat, if you make a fool of yourself, and you know, too, that you'll care. By the way, what are you going to do with young Egan—I believe that's his name—this Winter?"

"I think of letting him go to Paris to continue his studies."

"To Paris! My dear, you must be crazy. Pitch a boy into Paris alone, and four times out of five you seal his fate. Many are called, but few are chosen, over there."

"I didn't say that he would go alone," Miss Merrill stated calmly.

Silence intervened for an instant. Then Mrs. Hepburn asked:

"Lavinia, do you seriously think of *marrying* that—that child?"

"It depends," said her friend, as calmly as before, "largely on the child himself. Probably I shall, if he asks me, and I'm pretty sure he means to."

The visitor's mouth opened, as if for an exclamation of horror; instead, it gave vent to a booming laugh.

"I beg your pardon," she gasped between rumbles, "but the idea is desperately funny. Shades of bygone Harringtons! Your maternal ancestors would turn in their graves!"

Her hostess took no offense at the merriment. "Don't apologize. That's exactly the way it struck me, at first. I possess a sense of the ridiculous—in spite of my being trained to venerate the conservatism of the House of Harrington. Also, I've laughed too often at uneven marriages not to realize the humor of an alliance of thirty-seven with twenty-one."

"I'm glad you see the funny side of it," said Mrs. Hepburn, her mirth subsiding gradually. "It shows there's some hope for you."

"On the contrary, it shows that I'm quite resolved. If I hadn't already considered the funny side, I might be open to argument from that direction."

"Thirty-seven and twenty-one!" the other mused. "Forty-seven and thirty-one. Sixty, and forty-four. The more you increase the numbers the worse they sound, don't they? At

forty-four a man is in his prime, but a woman at sixty—well, you know as well as I what most of us will be at sixty.”

“Yes, I do,” said Miss Merrill. “And Fanny, you might talk all day about that and other sapient conclusions, without telling me a single thing that I haven’t thought of and thought out a hundred times before. I’m prepared to have it said that I married because I was a gullible, sentimental old maid, and that I was married because of my money. Perhaps there’ll even be several grains of truth in such charges. But there’s another side to the matter—one that hasn’t occurred to you, or at any rate hasn’t presented itself to you with concrete force.”

She stopped, and for the first time since the opening of the subject her easy smile yielded place to a tightening of the lips.

“You said a little while ago that I had no girlhood,” she continued then. “You might better have said that until my mother died I had no *life*—only existence. I don’t blame mother; she was nearly always too sick to be rational, and moreover, it was a part of her creed that, having given me birth, she had a first mortgage on me as long as she lived. My father’s beliefs, I imagine, were of a different brand; the little I can remember about him points to broader ideas. But naturally I was reared in my mother’s creed. I didn’t belong to myself at all. When I was introduced to society, and an occasional youth began to make tentative calls at the house, it was a foregone conclusion that he would soon become discouraged. There was no pleasure or advantage in calling on a girl who could move only at her mother’s beck. By-and-bye, my callers ceased coming altogether.”

“Yes,” nodded Mrs. Hepburn, “I remember. You didn’t have much fun. I used to feel awfully sorry for you.”

“Your sympathy was wasted, in a way, for I didn’t realize how much I was being robbed of. It wasn’t until some time after mother’s death that I

commenced to awake to the utter uselessness of my existence. When mother went my occupation went with her. My first impulse, after the shock had passed was to find somebody to care for—to scrape out a continuation of the rut, as you’ve expressed it. So I threw myself into organized charitable work, and I think,” she observed judicially, “that I’ve served the heathen and the helpless as vigorously as even mother could have wished.”

“Nobody has been more faithful. I don’t know what our branch of the Foreign Missionary Society would have done without you.”

“But for some reason,” Miss Merrill went on, “organized charities didn’t seem to fill the bill. You may laugh as much as you please, Fanny, when I tell you that I wanted something of my very own to look out for; it’s true, nevertheless. I even thought of adopting a child from some orphan asylum. But my sense of humor was too strong, and besides, a baby of that sort is a good deal like a lottery-ticket. You may draw a prize, but the chances are much against it. Perhaps I ought to have taken an interest in my large and ever-increasing list of cousins. Unfortunately, I knew that none of them cared a snap for me aside from my cash value, and I’d always detested them without exception. I think one is apt to hate cousins constitutionally. I was on the point of buying a cat and a parrot and settling down to await as patiently as possible the Age of Wrinkles and Yellow Skin, when the chance of helping John Egan came to my rescue.”

For an instant the smile reappeared, tolerantly humorous. Again it was replaced by the rigor of determination.

“I say ‘came to my rescue,’ advisedly. If it hadn’t been for that chance, I should have stagnated. I was very skeptical at first, because one hears so much about promising young artists, and finds the promise fulfilled so seldom. And the boy was such a rough cub. But I soon discovered that beneath his uncouthness there were both ability and delicacy. He was an

atavism, harking back beyond his stodgy, beer-bibbing parents to the poetic temperament of Celtic ancestors. By some strange vagary of Fate, the magical strain that produced the wild sagas of Ireland had come down to him undiluted. What he lacked was the opportunity for development. His father sneered at his artistic tendencies, and advised him to get a pick and earn his living by doing 'something useful.' Because he didn't happen to be a self-righteous little prig, willing to cringe for pennies, no philanthropist would help him. He clerked in a store, and saved enough money for a course in drawing at a night school, but the encouragement he got was so meager, and the constant discouragement so great, that he was in two minds whether or not to follow his father's advice at the time I heard of him. I took him up through pity and curiosity; I kept on with him because he interested me. I don't pretend to any extraordinary altruism in the matter. I've been helped as much as he. The necessity of strengthening him has brought out the part of me that lay dormant—made a woman of me, instead of a sexless nonentity. If I had simply presented him with money, and told him I hoped he'd use it to advantage, he might have been grateful, but he would never have succeeded as an artist. He would have succumbed to the innate despondency that he inherits from distant dreamers in common with his ability, and to the sordid influences of his home and training. I furnish him with persistence and sympathy, as well as with dollars. If I dropped him now, he would still go back—trail off to mediocrity or nothingness. There's not much steel in his composition. But if I choose to bind him closer to me, and help him through the next few years as I've helped him through the past two, the chance is good that he'll amount to something big in his line. And I do choose; I don't intend to see the one positive labor that I've accomplished brought to naught. With this single exception, all my performances have been nega-

tive—concessions to weakness, and failure, and grief, and death. Now I see an opportunity to deal with life and hope. Shall I throw it away because of doubts and laughter? I should be a coward to do that. No, I'll take it as it comes, and give thanks that I'm not already too fossilized to appreciate it."

Mrs. Hepburn was not a person who needed much time in which to gather her thoughts; her ponderousness was of the body, not of the mind. Throughout the recital she had listened with good-humored attention. Now she said, almost immediately:

"Yes, I see that view, and I don't know that I blame you. But it still seems to me that you're skipping essentials. You persist in passing over the difference in age. If you were fifteen, or even ten, years younger, I'd say, 'Go ahead and God bless you.' I can appreciate the force of your arguments, but—you're *thirty-seven years old*. Have you looked at that fact from the boy's side?"

It was Miss Merrill's turn to be amused.

"You dulled your point at the outset. Didn't you tell me that I looked no more than twenty-eight? I made a polite disclaimer, as a matter of course, but I should be as blind as—as I used to be if I couldn't see that I'm a handsome woman. That's one of the things which have been revealed to me recently. And boys worship beauty, Fanny—particularly if they're artists. Mine will last until the need for it has been outgrown. You said, too, that I seemed to be growing younger instead of older. Don't you think you're just a bit illogical?"

A whimsical expression, which on features less pudgy would have been a thing for esthetic joy, came over Mrs. Hepburn's face.

"Illogical? Perhaps so, my dear. Anyone who talks as much as I do can't always pay heed to logic. . . . Yes, I did say that you seemed to be growing younger, and I meant it. You're wonderfully lovely. Yet after all, no matter what things of that sort

we may say or even feel, we can't really counterfeit Youth. Once gone, it's gone forever, and the loss of it is the tragedy of womankind. Nothing ever quite makes up for Youth—though we pretend to hold it in scorn after it has left us. We tell ourselves that it is a doubtful blessing at the best, but sooner or later we learn that it is stronger than we, and even if we accept the knowledge philosophically, preferring optimism to pessimism, there's a sting deep down in our hearts. Even I— But I'm sitting here airing the skeleton in the closet of my sex, while Andrew Hepburn is on his way home to dinner. I've a new cook, and the things she's likely to do if left to herself are awful to contemplate, so I must be going. Women may dream, and boys worship beauty, but a middle-aged man wants his dinner, hot and on time."

The last word came out with a wheeze, for the speaker was heavily hoisting herself out of the rocker. She paused, however, before adventuring the descent of the steps.

"I hope you'll change your mind," she said. "But whatever you do, you can count on my bulky friendship in the future. A little affair like a foolish marriage won't change my feelings toward you. When do you expect the young man to declare himself formally?"

"Tonight, I'm inclined to think. He wrote, saying that he would reach Ware this afternoon and call on me in the evening 'to make a very important communication.'"

Mrs. Hepburn chuckled. "How very boy-like! Well, I wish you luck in any case, Lavinia. I hope I haven't thrown too much cold water, or forced your confidence unduly with my impertinent questions. Remember for your comfort that I'm that rare creature, a woman of many words, who nevertheless knows how to keep a secret."

"I'll remember that and more, Fanny; I'll remember that you're a first-class friend. But you haven't forced my confidence or influenced my opinions in the least. I think the value

of discussion lies less in getting another's views than in straightening out one's own, don't you? Good-bye?"

As she took her way upstairs Miss Merrill reaped no aftermath of regret for having spoken so freely. Indeed, she was rather glad that she had explained her plans to Fanny Hepburn; for, in addition to the clearness of vision derived from the explanation itself, she felt an increase of courage and poise, because she had been able to retain her self-possession so well while making it. This self-possession was comparatively new in her, and she hailed it as a sign of progress.

To dress elaborately for dinner was also a new and exhilarating operation. It was not the custom at Ware to don evening dress for any save unusual "functions"; the ladies of the "faculty set," which included most of the old families, contented themselves with high-necked gowns—and those of the very plainest—on ordinary occasions. Perhaps this general habit was less the result of prejudice than of a desire to save trouble, but nevertheless Lavinia had been taught as a girl that the wearing of gay clothes by the home fireside was a practice of vulgarity. Her mother, in fact, in the days when health had allowed her to mix with society, had limited herself to somber colors of a severe cut, enlivened only by antique jewelry and a spattering of jet. She regarded many fashionable costumes, even of that day, as suitable only for the seclusion of the boudoir. The daughter had passed through the years of her youth without owning anything more giddy than a demi-toilette of especially modest pattern. All fluffy things dear to the normal feminine heart but not absolutely necessary to comfort had been tabooed. Because of her enforced isolation, the young Lavinia had not felt the hardship of this; the taste for frivolous adornment was of as recent development as the ability to gratify it, unscorned and unrebuked. Miss Merrill, sedate of garb in her girlhood to the point of prudery, had learned in the past few months to consider it but the due of her undeniable

charms to array herself as richly as was permitted by the modiste's art. Even when she was to dine alone she applied the doctrine of Art for Art's Sake to her appareling.

Yet she did not overlook the value of simplicity in dress, any more than she made the mistake of loading her shapely hands with rings. The intuitive knowledge of what was becoming was none the less strong on account of the lateness of its realization. This evening she chose black velvet, above which her splendid shoulders and throat rose in dazzling contrast. In her hair she pinned a single red rose. It was a costume rich enough for a ball, but so simple—to the untutored vision—that it would not grate upon the mere masculine notion of appropriateness; Miss Merrill had her reasons for wishing to look particularly stunning. As she surveyed the result in her mirror she had the satisfaction of knowing that she was at her best—that, in fact, few women, whatever their age, could have appeared more effectively. The little wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, deftly treated with a careful hand, scarcely showed themselves to the closest scrutiny; beneath the kindly light of a high chandelier they and the other signs of the years would be practically invisible. She could not doubt the effect of her beauty on young Egan; she had seen the admiration in his eyes too often not to be sure of him. What surprised her was that she was so sure of herself. It seemed to her that, logically, she ought to experience shyness and tremors; instead, she found herself more than usually calm. This did not displease her. Rather, she regarded it as an advantage given her by the age of discretion. Because of it she would be enabled to appreciate her triumph the more rationally.

She dined in solitary state at the head of a table covered with gleaming silver and winking cut-glass. In Mrs. Merrill's time the massive family tableware had languished in a safety-deposit vault. A few pieces of it were sometimes taken out at Thanksgiving and Christmas, to grace a semi-festal

board, but as a rule it was held too sacred for use. Lavinia had lately changed all that. She reveled in her heirlooms, not because they were heirlooms, but because they were handsome, and the heavy silver—salver and urn and pitchers—marked with Harrington or Merrill monograms, now saw the light every day. Their owner had come to believe in the philosophy of enjoying life's material blessings.

The maid brought in Egan's card before the termination of the meal. Miss Merrill smiled at the impatience which could not await a formal calling-hour. She finished her coffee composedly; the anticipation of pleasure was worth prolonging a little. Then she rose, walked slowly through the hall—casting a glance at the hall mirror as her reflection crossed it—and passed between the portières.

The young artist had grown a beard during the Summer. Lavinia, giving him her hand, thought that the change had improved him; it lengthened his face, and concealed a weak chin. He was tanned, too, and his blue eyes shone with a new vivacity that must have been bred of healthy exercise in the open air.

"You're looking much better than when I saw you last," she said. "I see that the vacation has agreed with you."

"And you," he returned, "are looking as well as when I last saw you. It would be impossible to say more—an omission if I failed to say as much."

The compliment was a bit stilted and clumsily turned, perhaps, but it was not so bad for a boy who, two years before, would not have thought of attempting such a thing. Besides, sincerity was in his voice—the sincerity of vigorous admiration. Miss Merrill felt a swift access of the timidity which had hitherto left her free.

"Thank you," said she. "You must tell me about your Summer. Have you been doing much work?"

"Well—no. To tell the truth, I haven't touched a brush." He stopped and blushed. "That is," he corrected himself, "I've only touched one a few

times. That's one of the things I wanted to talk to you about."

"Yes? I don't know that you need to apologize. A little rest won't do you any harm. You'll be able to concentrate yourself all the better this Autumn."

He frowned. "That's not exactly the trouble. . . . Miss Merrill, do you know I'm getting awfully in your debt?"

"Oh—the money," she said blankly. This was not what she had expected. "Why, you needn't worry about the money. I look on it as a safe investment; you'll be able to pay it back in due time, you know."

"I know that you're kind enough to say so. But *shall* I be able to pay it back? I've been talking with—well, with several people, and they tell me it's going to be a long time before I can even earn my living by painting, much less pay debts. I may never be able to pay."

"My dear boy," said Miss Merrill, returning unconsciously to the maternal manner of her first struggles with him, "I don't expect you to pay for a great many years. Indeed, I shall be repaid if you do good work, whether you replace the actual dollars or not. I should be satisfied to have bought the privilege of giving the world a great artist."

"But Art isn't everything in the world," he rejoined, with second-hand wisdom. "I've been thinking that an artist is apt to be a pretty helpless sort of man. I'm not sure that I want to be one, after all."

"You don't want to be an artist! What do you want to be, pray?"

He made a large, vague gesture. "Oh, I want to be bigger—to amount to more in everyday life. I want to get into a business where I can feel the contact and throb of humanity. It seems babyish to stand off and paint, when there's so much a-doing! I know I'm hideously ungrateful, after all you've done for me, but——"

"You mustn't consider me at all," Lavinia interrupted, conventionally. Surprise robbed her of the ability to think quickly. "You must do what is

best for yourself. But isn't this rather a revolution?"

The young man twisted about in his chair, rubbed his hands together, and then grinned sheepishly. "I guess it is," he admitted. "I suppose I ought to be ashamed of it, but I'm not—altogether. I'm so happy that I can't be very much ashamed. You remember I wrote that I had something important to communicate to you? Well, I can tell you that and the cause of my revolution in two words: I'm engaged!"

Her own poise, and descent from many generations of reserved New Englanders, gave Lavinia Merrill the strength to withstand the shock of this statement without flinching visibly; they could not give her the power to respond at once with appropriate speech. The blinding egotism of inexperience, however, prevented the boy from noticing her silence. He was busy with his own happiness.

"I know you'll think me foolish," he went on, "but I simply couldn't help it. I believed I knew all about love, but when this came it struck me all of a heap. . . . Miss Merrill, she's the most wonderful girl in all the world! You'll forgive me when you see her."

"There is nothing for me to forgive," said Lavinia, between dry lips. "My duty is to congratulate you most heartily."

He nodded. "I used to imagine," he laughed, "that I was in love with you—Fancy the impertinence!"

She forced herself to smile.

"And then I met Laura, and learned how mistaken I'd been. Why, our falling in love was like a river running down to the sea, and the sea waiting for it with open arms. Or she was a flower, and I the dew! But that isn't saying that Laura's too poetical; she's a very practical girl. She's intensely artistic, but she doesn't like—well, she thinks I ought not to keep on borrowing from you, even for the sake of Art. She thinks I can achieve success more quickly in some other profession. You mustn't blame her for my change of mind, though—not directly, at least.

I commenced to realize long before she said anything on the subject that there are lots of tasks better worth doing than pictures. I can't explain just what I mean; but it seemed as if I had been dreaming away my time over nothing all these years, and was suddenly awaking to realities. And now Laura's father has offered me a place in his office."

There was more, but Miss Merrill did not hear it. She was trying to bring order into the shattered structure of her ideas. Through the débris of her schemes she sought a reason for the devastating success of this "Laura." Why should a chit of a girl be able in three short months to bring destruction where she herself had wrought and builded carefully, sparing neither love nor money, for years? Was there logic in this overthrow? Abruptly she became aware that her whilom protégé was holding out a hand toward her, with some small object in it.

"This is her picture," he was saying, bashfully but proudly. "Wouldn't you like to look at it?"

She took the little leather-covered case gingerly, and glanced down at the face within. She fancied she knew the general type of Laura's features, and did not suppose that the reason she sought could be found in a photograph.

Yes, Laura had a round face, with a pretty mouth, an indefinite nose, medium-sized eyes and a violent pompadour. There was nothing remarkable in that aggregation. And yet—Miss Merrill looked closer; something intangible, indescribable, about pose and expression caught her attention. Startled, she stared from the picture to the boy opposite her, and saw a duplicate of this something in the vivacity of his face, which she had ascribed previously to good health and to his love for her. His love for her! . . . She groped back for a word that had escaped her, a thought dimly remembered. "Once gone. . . . Youth. . . . The tragedy of womankind. . . . Nothing ever quite makes up for Youth. Sooner or later we learn that it is stronger than we." Fanny Hepburn had said that.

Youth, whose vernal heyday she had missed, and whose glamour would not come to the calling; Youth, the bronze giant with a clay head; the tragic, and the ridiculous; sharp of contrasts and yielding of similitudes; Youth, powerful, weak, foolish, wise, beautiful, fantastic, kindly, cruel, victorious—

She returned the photograph, and as she did so, shivered. The air of the room was warm, but Winter was approaching.



RESTORATION

By Charles L. O'Donnell

FROM these dead leaves the winds have caught
And on the brown earth fling,
Yea, from their dust new hosts shall rise
At the trumpet-call of Spring.

Thus may the winds our ashes take,
But in that far dusk dim,
When God's eye hath burnt up the worlds,
This flesh shall stand with Him.

THE GOOD MAN

By Arthur Stringer

I

MACKILLRAY was a dour man,
Workin' night and day,
Thryin' to build a grand house,
And frettin' life away.

When he'd built his foine house,
High beyont the furze,
Not a girl in Kildare
Sought to make it hers!

II

Larry was a young de'il,
Idlin' youth away,
A-pipin' and philanderin'
And laughin' all the day.

Never was a colleen
Trode the Kildare sod
*But homeless would have fared forth
At homeless Larry's nod!*



HER PROBABLE REASON

“DAY before yesterday, right out in front of the hotel, here,” said the landlord of the tavern at Polkville, Ark., “a nice-looking grass-widow met a feller that had been going with her some, and fired three shots at him, one of which tore off considerable of his south ear as he was rapidly going east. I was settin’ on the porch at the time, and saw it all, and——”

“Great Scott!” ejaculated the washing-machine agent, pricking up his ears eagerly, “unless it is a matter that you don’t care to discuss, I wish you would tell me what, in your opinion, was the lady’s reason for such an act?”

“Well, I reckon,” was the ingenuous reply, “that she was mad at him. Of course, she mightn’t have been—you can’t tell much about women, you know—but that’s the way it looked to me.”

TOM P. MORGAN.

THE GARDEN OF HER SOUL

By Mrs. Luther Harris

I

DAYTON sat looking off over the forest of gold and green, the flaming maples, the big, solemn pines, with a Bismarckian frown between his brows. Here and there a bit of scarlet sumac proclaimed the heart of the wood and the heart of the Autumn as having renewed their brilliant yearly alliance. The place seemed written over with the strange hieroglyphics of prehistoric inscriptions. Doubtless some mighty upheaval of nature had here rent the black chasm and the lava bluffs, and left those great, yawning cracks whose ragged cleavage seemed opening to unmeasured depths below.

Perhaps some titanic convulsion had hewn a way, ages ago, for the noisy river, which like a giant plowshare had cut a broad swath through the valley. The roar of its waters echoed among the hills.

In places the walls seemed reared in symmetrical columns, sheer cliffs in tones of soft gray, or blackened as if burned with long-dead fires. Once a low, distant rumbling sounded along the hills, where some crag on which the bunch grass had grown in deceptive greenness had broken from its delicate poise of carefully balanced weight and gone thundering down the ragged height to add its shattered fragments to the mass which for ages had been accumulating at the foot of the cliffs.

Far below the little village stretched along the white sands, its red-roofed houses hobnobbing in friendly fashion cheek by jowl.

Some of the modern, more preten-

tious cottages came half-way up the hills, snuggling under their syringa and purple clematis vines. Here the shifting colony of tourists and sojourners congregated through the brief, brilliant Summer. Dayton had waited their exodus, only coming when his human kind had flocked to the maelstrom of great cities. His eyes wandered lazily beyond the border of tall pines to where slopes of wild pasture were dotted with grazing cattle.

"Here," he mused, as he leaned against the dark cleavage of the rock, "is a long-sought Eldorado of silence and solitude." And a fugitive peace seemed to settle upon him.

Gradually his mind withdrew itself from the allurements and grandeur of the rugged beauty around him and settled back into his habitual mood of bitter, brooding melancholy. His face darkened, and the lines about his rather homely, strong mouth came out as if drawn with a stencil. For a long time he sat glowering under bent brows, deep in savage thought.

Suddenly, with a start, he was brought out of his mood of abstraction by the sight of some round, careering object which was making its way toward him down one of the innumerable paths which led to the plateau above. Gaining speed at every bound it came whirling downward. With a final flutter it lodged and settled among the dry grasses where Dayton had stretched his long legs to the very verge of the cliff.

It appeared to be a mauve straw hat covered with a profusion of velvety violets and swathed in a filmy veil. He picked it up and examined it

gingerly, much as if handling a bomb with explosive possibilities. A subtle, vanishing perfume clung to it as if the violets themselves threw out a woodsy odor as though just gathered in some dew-laden forest deep in shadow. He got to his feet and surveyed the many cattle trails winding about the bluffs from base to summit.

The lower path on which he stood was narrower and more precipitous than those above, following, in truth, the sheer edge of the cliff where it jutted out above the river. He stood, indeed, on a flat, broad ledge, overgrown with grasses, soft with fallen leaves and gray with lichens. It thrust a table-like extension half-way between the steep summit and the beach below.

His eye was caught by the flutter of a muslin gown of a most delectable shade of heliotrope, on the heights above. A young girl sat there apparently looking off over the purple hills and oblivious of the fact that her violet-trimmed hat had taken a careering flight down the incline. With uplifted face her pose was one of rapt absorption.

It dawned upon Dayton in a flash of illumination that she must be a left-over tourist or health-seeker still stranded here in this remote outpost of civilization.

"And I flattered myself I had so neatly side-stepped them all!" he mumbled in impotent inward wrath and fury. "I came up here to invite my soul. And how can one invite his soul with an intrusive, heliotrope-gowned female in the immediate foreground?"

Somber-eyed and glum he picked up his crutch, and holding the hat awkwardly by a loop of its velvet ribbon made his way up the path. Already he could see the look that would come into the girl's eyes. . . . How he *hated* that look, half-pity. . . .

But it was obviously his duty to return the hat. He would do so and make off with the greatest possible speed. As he drew near, another figure came into view. The girl was not alone.

"The woods are full of 'em," he soliloquized sourly. At some distance from the girl, leaning back against a white-birch rustic seat, was an elderly woman, evidently sleeping peacefully, an open book in her lap.

Dayton's steps were almost noiseless on the carpet of pine needles underfoot, and he was very near before the girl turned her head. He braced himself to meet the look which he had never yet, even after two years of struggle, been able to meet with anything like stoical fortitude and indifference.

Her only expression was one of startled, half-questioning fright. The pretty line of her lips seemed tremulous. Dayton's first shadowy impression as he glanced at her was that she was an extremely well-bred girl with a great quantity of Romanesque hair of a peculiar, tawny copper. She wore it massed in heavy braids and wrapped about her head in an Oriental way that appealed to his sense of fitness by reason of its harmony with her entire person.

Her hands were folded in her lap; delicate, high-bred, clever hands. And she had singularly vacant eyes.

She started nervously when he dropped the hat into her lap and had a half-appealing look of timidity.

"I found it rolling down the hill," he said brusquely, without any approach to what he himself would have designated as "conventional frills." "It appeared to be taking a header for parts unknown. I rather fancy the violets are a bit frazzled."

"Oh, thank you *so* much," she said, in a voice whose vibrant quality seemed to carry pathos with it. "I—I hadn't missed it. I guess Madame Richieu must be asleep; she so often is. I fancy it's this high, rarified atmosphere up here and the somnolent odor of the pines. Will you sit down? Madame will wake presently. She will be desolated to have caused anyone the trouble of bringing back my hat."

With an impulse he could neither explain nor understand, so wholly at variance it was with his original inten-

tion, Dayton sank on the grass beside her.

"Madame is quite deaf," the girl explained, with a shadowy smile like a shy child; "our talking will not in the least disturb her—especially when she is once adrift on such a sea of slumber as that. Listen!"

She lifted her hand and suddenly her face broke into little lines of laughter. Undoubtedly madame was snoring; a very discreet, ladylike snore, to be sure, but a snore none the less. She was a little woman with gray hair, small, doll-like features and extremely white hands. On the open book in her lap was coiled the black rubber tube of an ear-trumpet.

"How unspeakably delightful the air is up here," said the girl, lifting her face as if drinking in a breath of its perfume. Her air of distinction somehow suggested to Dayton a full-length portrait. "The Portrait of a Lady," he said to himself. The poise of her head on her slender neck, the turn of her shoulders, bespoke breeding in every curve. "Thoroughbred, that's the word," he communed with his inner consciousness. She had a clever, pointed chin and the healthful color of a burnt nectarine.

"It's just like a pot-pourri of nature's own mixing—the air up here." Her voice had an undertone in it that was like wine. "Don't you smell the pollen from the golden-rod? And senna—I fancy I have detected senna. Do you happen to see a plant with long, gray-green leaves growing in little, slender bunches?"

Dayton peered about. Presently he spied a withered bunch which tallied with this description, and pulling it up ruthlessly by the roots presented it to her.

"Seems to me I used to take that when I was a little shaver," he said, sniffing its pungent odor.

"I don't doubt it. In senna tea." She laughed, showing uneven little blue-white teeth. "I did, too. The reason it does you so much good is because you forget you've got anything the matter with you only that

taste in your mouth. The pines across the gully there sound like great organ-pipes when the wind runs its fingers over their tops."

Dayton looked across the valley where a purple mantle of twilight was only beginning to creep and settle among the trees. His boldly modeled face was full of a sort of rugged simplicity. The squarely molded chin gave one an impression of reserve power and force. Yet the face held a shadowy, tragic something—was it the eyes?

"Do you see four white birches like sentinels along the purple line of hills over there?" he asked, pointing with one lean, brown finger.

She turned her face toward him. Just a perceptible flicker of emotion swept over it. But her voice was under perfect control when she said:

"Then you do not know?"

"Know what?" queried Dayton, looking up.

"That I am blind."

The words, for all their soft intonation, struck him like blows. Involuntarily he drew in a breath of astonishment. Her face paled a trifle, and she half-turned from him, a tremulous little smile about her lips.

"How long?" he asked stupidly, scarcely conscious that he spoke, cursing himself when he heard the blundering words.

"Three years. And I am twenty now, so you see I had seventeen years of sunlight—and with every joy that could possibly be crowded into a young girl's life. That gives me such a lot to dream of now, you see—and remember." She smiled, a brave, pale smile. He looked at her with a quick, fierce glance of scrutiny.

So *that* was how she thought of it! "It gave her such a lot to dream of—and remember!"

"God!" he said below his breath; and his laugh was cynicism vocalized. "Beg pardon, I was only thinking how very far I am from having reached your heights. Being blind, you, too, 'do not know.'"

She turned a wondering face. "Do not know—what?"

"That I am hideous—a blot on the face of nature."

"Pardon me," she said, her color rising, "but I do not believe you are hideous; not with so gentle a voice."

"But I am. A halting, misshapen thing, dragging a twisted limb——"

"Oh," she said breathlessly, "don't; please! I know you're not all that."

"I wasn't two years ago. I suppose the Lord rather delights in taking it out of a fellow when He sees him so puffed up with what the psalmists call 'unholy pride'—in his own brawn and sinew. Likes to land him a knock-out blow in the solar plexus of his own conceit and send him back groveling to the dust from which He made him in the first place. It was a football scrimmage that did for me." His lips curled in a sinister smile of self-derision. "I went into the game fit to lick my weight in wildcats. And I came out——"

He made a repellent gesture with his hands and fell silent. Presently, "Well," he said, with his queer, twisted smile, "possibly I, too, have something to remember. It was life while it lasted. To go into a game like that was just like being a starved cat and getting out among a lot of birds. The more I got mauled the more intoxicated I was with the joy of it. You—you have seen a football game?" he asked hesitatingly.

Suddenly he said: "My name is Thomas Hawks Dayton. I hardly need tell you that the Harvard fellows dubbed me 'Tommyhawk.' I believe I used to be known as a 'jolly good fellow,' and a 'good mixer,' and all that. But I'm soured and seared, and altogether unlovable and impossible now. I'm sure you wouldn't enjoy knowing me. I'm about the least desirable of acquaintances."

"Oh, but I'm quite sure I *should* enjoy knowing you," she laughed again, dimpling delightfully. She gesticulated with a charming little half-foreign air. Spirit and life brimmed in her.

"The Juggernaut of Fate isn't rubber-tired, you know," he smiled grimly, "and when it went over me it smashed all the 'jolly good fellow' out and left only a miserable, cynical husk that everybody hates."

Her hand went out unconsciously. "I—I don't believe that. You only think that because you—you haven't just exactly adjusted yourself yet."

"No, I haven't." The words wrenched his lips into a dry twist. "I'll have to admit I've fallen a victim to the caustic epigram habit, and likewise I'm afraid I have an eruption known as pessimism." He laughed.

"That isn't incurable. Are you like the boy in the school primer who 'took his disposition with him everywhere he went'?"

How strong she was with her fine, urgent spirit of youth and—yes—joy! He looked at her, his eyes clouded with bewilderment. It was a face that reflected sweetness and spirit and humor. How abundantly vital, charged with life she was! He had always connected blindness with such colorless personality as that of Nydia in "The Last Days of Pompeii."

Madame slept on peacefully, purring like a contented cat on a sunny window-sill. Silently Dayton was studying the girl, with a serious, cogitating air as if he were puzzling over a problem.

He turned to her presently with an impulse that lost all thought of the unconventionality of the situation and the proceeding.

"I don't know why I'm talking to you like this," he said, aglow with a singular compelling desire to drink at the fountain of her courage, "for of course you don't know me from Adam's pet monkey and can't possibly have any interest in me, and I know I'm boring you to the verge of extinction."

"Oh, but you're *not*! I was only just thinking how uncommonly nice it was of you to take me into your inner sanctuary like this."

"I'm sure I can't explain it—I don't know why it is—but all at once I feel like a blooming coward—like a fellow

who had knuckled down in a fight instead of standing up and taking his medicine. You—you impress me as being so uncommonly brave in—in the face of an affliction—” He felt about for words delicate enough to refer to her blindness. He wondered if he could possibly make his voice as gentle as he wished it to be.

“All at once you make me realize,” he went on in a breathless voice, “that I’ve been a cringing coward before misfortune.”

Over beyond the purple hills thunder heads were forming and the air tingled with premonitions of a coming storm. The girl smiled as he looked up at her, and sudden pity smote him for her vacant eyes.

“You see,” his voice trailed on, “I was uncommonly set up over being such a finished specimen of brawn and sinew and endurance. Then I guess I was rather spoiled in the raising—having more money than was good for a fellow. Dear old dad is the best ever. We were comrades and chums—till this happened.”

His voice grew tense and he lifted his shoulders as if adjusting them to a load. “Since then it’s been all anybody’s reason was worth to live with me. For downright ill-nature I guess I’ve been the limit—and a few chips over. Most of the time I’ve been prowling over Europe, hating myself to death. Every time I’d see an athletic-looking chap swinging along at a good, brisk pace I’d want to kill him. Just to make a bald statement of truth and keep nothing back I don’t mind telling you that for a while I even resorted to the little black tears of the poppy—which you probably don’t know means little opium pellets. But, thank God, there was enough of dad’s fighting blood left in me, and decent manliness, to cut that out in short order. When I look back on the last two years it’s just like being dragged backward through hell. And all the time consumed by a nostalgia which eats into the heart like a corroding acid. I had planned to reënter Harvard by the law school, and it wasn’t *altogether*”—he grinned sourly

—“because I wanted another year on the football team, though being able to sprint a quarter in fifty-five flat *may* have had something to do with it. I’ve been wondering lately how long it would be before it was me for the padded cell. I came back from abroad a few weeks ago and finally came up here to this little hamlet among the blue hills—thinking I would have it out with my soul. It was late in the season, and I thought—”

Her face was like a May day breaking. “You thought all the tourists would be gone!”

He held his breath at the contagious gaiety of her laugh. “Yes, to be honest, I did,” he admitted. “And behold, a violet-trimmed hat rolls down the hill and lodges at my feet. And at once I have a pricking in my thumbs.”

“Madame and I found it impossible,” she explained, “to follow the outgoing tide of tourists; the place holds a sort of hypnotic charm. She is a delightful little Frenchwoman whom I found in rather straitened circumstances in Rouen and have taken as companion. The Juggernaut has passed over her, too. She had once a very wonderful and beautiful voice and was successfully launched as a public singer. Through a very serious illness she lost her voice. But she, too, has memories—of vast audiences that rose to wild enthusiasm under the thrilling beauty of her voice. When she wishes to be very facetious she is fond of saying that she ‘has sung before all the crowned heads of Europe and all the dead-heads of America.’”

Again her easy laugh. His analytical quality of mind made him puzzle over her like some unfinished mystery tale. She *must* have served a novitiate of sorrow, and yet—

Something stirred in his heart and surged to his throat. By contrast his own mental attitude seemed a humiliating and spineless status.

“She makes me feel that I’m nothing more than an ‘also ran,’” he said. A few heavy drops began pattering among the leaves. A running volley of dis-

tant thunder cannoned among the hills. The rubber ear-trumpet on madame's black taffeta lap slid hastily to the grass as she got to her feet, opening her eyes. They were mild, gentle eyes, like a King Charles spaniel's, and impressed one as having once been very bright blue, but had gone too often to the wash.

"I—I think I must have fallen asleep, Sabine," she said, advancing, while a blurred look of astonishment swept over her face.

"I rather fancy you *did* doze off a moment. It's evidently going to storm. This is Mr. Dayton, madame. The pines are tuning up for a grand old symphony. The *ensemble* is nothing short of inspiring when they get fairly going under the baton of the wind. I'm going to sit out on that little covered balcony tonight and take in the whole orchestral programme."

Dayton cursed his stumbling gait as they made their way down the long incline. The girl's face flushed as she laid her shy hand on his sleeve, madame leaving her to his guidance. He glowed under the demand of her seductive helplessness. All the protective male instinct thrilled at the appeal.

He left them at their lodgings, in a Queen Anne cottage of the variety which makes one glad to remember that Queen Anne is dead.

Then he made his way to old Babette's, whose red-roofed cottage clung like a limpet to the hillside—old Babette, whose quaint patois delighted him and whose motherly old heart brooded over him.

All the next day he carried about with him unaccountably a sense of elation, a breezy uplift of spirit, a glow. He saw nothing of the girl and her companion that day, but on the following afternoon he came upon them drinking tea by a little table under the big white birches on the lawn. Madame beckoned him in, poising her cup daintily over the open pages of the omnipresent Balzac in her lap.

She gave one the impression of having been melted and poured into her little gray broadcloth gown at a

temperature alarmingly high, and to have made what the sculptors call "a good setting in the mold."

Sabine herself served him with tea, her hands moving over the little cups in a way marvelous to behold.

"It is caravan tea with a bit of Burgundy. We never have iced tea," she explained, "because madame says putting ice in it makes it cold."

For half-an-hour madame rattled the dice of small-talk industriously, lifting her ear-trumpet to catch Dayton's clever *tournures de phrase*.

"Monsieur will excuse me?" she said presently, "I have some stupid letters to write—ah, *que cela m'embête!*"

She was gone with a pretty inclination of her head, untying a bit of powder from the corner of her handkerchief. She had a habit of applying this constantly to the tip of her small nose, giving it much the effect of hoar-frost on a flower.

One afternoon he came upon the girl alone, on that shelving rock where he had sat that day when the wind of destiny whirled the violet hat down the hill.

"Madame is off in the sticky quest of balsam," she explained, "and I promised not to move an eyelash till she returned. If it didn't sound so much like the school rhetoric I'd say that this air up here this morning is like a drink of nectar from the golden cup of the gods on high Olympus. I feel myself getting what in slang parlance you might call half-seas-over."

"I believe," he said, dropping beside her, "you could extract a joke from every situation in life."

"Oh, no"—she shook a protesting head, her low laughter was mellow and fruity like old wine—"no, I've been the extra girl at a house-party."

"What a God's-in-his-heaven-all's-right-with-the-world feeling she gives a fellow!" he mused. "Jove! what a triumph of the Almighty's ingenuity a woman is, after all."

She sat as if looking off with her sightless eyes at the sunlit hills, her face soft as a pearl and dreamy with thought. Something about her restful

personality suggested the half-glow of twilight which throws into softening shadow the glaring discrepancies of high noon.

"Do you know," she said presently, "I sometimes feel that if my sight ever returns it might be up here in this glorious, buoyant, sparkling air, among these heaven-kissed hills. The first year after it went from me I consulted one specialist after another. It seems to me I trailed over the entire continent of Europe. They were all apparently baffled by the unusual character of my case. Sometimes professional diplomacy made them shy about saying so—but they were baffled just the same. In London a great specialist said: 'Sometime it may come back in a flash. If, under the stress of some great and startling situation you *tried hard enough* to see'—"

She broke off, her face turned from him, the lips tremulous. Then suddenly she beamed on him like a Southern dawn. "As if one would be likely to do other than *try* to see! How absurd! It would have seemed a cruel thing to say only that I knew what a very great man he was and what a big, kind heart he had under his bluff exterior. 'Sometime something may startle those numbed nerves into sight again,' he said."

Dayton was permeated by a consciousness of her singular giving of herself, her gift of courage. "That's it," he said, "it's her gift of courage."

The days in which he did not see her he came to feel as lost days in the calendar of life. In their talks together, their walks over those ribbon-like paths that wound about the hillside, her shy hand on his sleeve, he found it impossible to air his abominable sophistries. In her presence a scathing homily, in his old vein, on the diabolical discrepancies of life seemed banal and puerile. It appeared to place him on so inferior a spiritual plane that he hesitated to let such engulfing distances divide them. Away from her he found it impossible to even think of her without a blinding rush of tenderness.

Madame's chaperonage was of the discreetly self-effacing order. With her Balzac open in her lap she usually made a picturesque bit of color in the middle distance. She always carried about with her a small folding-chair of the variety used by excursion boats and undertakers. She would unfold this and seat herself upon it. Then after reading a few pages she would drift gently into slumber—sitting bolt upright like a sentinel on duty, and in a position which for uncompromising discomfort might have given pointers to St. Simeon on his pillar.

II

AND the great miracle which had its first working in the Beautiful Garden was worked again for these two, here in the velvet-shod silence of the hills.

Vaguely Dayton realized that the day he had picked up the violet hat he had passed the Rubicon lying between existence and life. Always when with the girl he watched her, puzzled, wondering awesomely, his consuming curiosity like a lambent flame in his face.

Their silences needed no embroidering; they were the pregnant silences that knit souls closer than spoken word. Dayton's black brooding was no longer a depressing thing like a tangible weight. "First thing I know I'll have a corner on 'sweetness and light,'" he sometimes communed with his inner consciousness. All at once his blighted days seemed efflorescent.

At late twilight one evening he was strolling toward his favorite rendezvous—the great cliff. Suddenly he stopped midway of the path, catching a quick breath of gasping astonishment.

Coming toward him, walking slowly in the narrow path, was Sabine. Instantly it flashed upon him that she believed herself on the upper road where a broad tableland spread on either side; that she had taken the fancy to walk alone, as she sometimes did on the beach below; and that she had no idea that one false step . . .

Ages and eons seemed to intervene before he reached her and spoke her name. His voice was hoarse and shaken and he caught her wrists, his face going white to the lips. She wore a blue linen blouse, its broad collar thrown back, and in the triangle of white flesh her throat throbbed like the breast of a bird. She was bare-headed, and behind her the sunset ran its illumined fingers through her hair making it an aureole of coppery light.

For a moment she stood poised in panic, startled like a faun, her breath coming quickly. He felt her tremble against him.

"Come," he said, with a great sighing breath of thankfulness, the loosened tension of taut-drawn nerves. And he guided her to the great rock overhanging the chasm.

She sank down, pallid and nerveless. "You were on the lower path," he said, with a quiet effort at control. But suddenly his voice broke and he rushed into impetuous speech.

"My God, if I had not taken that path! Don't you know what it means to me, your going about like that? Don't you know?"

Something swept every muted chord of his soul and waked it to melody. His words stumbled upon themselves beseeching her to do with his life what she would. He stretched forth his love and his humility in imploring hands.

She was making little futile efforts to rise. But he caught her hand and drew her down, and reiterated his passionate outburst.

No, she would not allow another's life to be shadowed. . . . That he could think her capable of taking advantage of such magnanimity!

Her trembling smile was like a little flickering flame, a flame that would have died at a breath. She hung to her tumultuous, breathless denial. The sudden marvel left her trembling. Her heart-beats had risen to a fluttering crescendo.

At a breath of hesitation Dayton again took up his jeremiad with renewed vigor. The catch in her throat

had almost got beyond her, and she felt that she was losing control of herself, that she would betray her own weakness of resolve, and that, out of sheer exhaustion, she would swerve from her clearly ordained path of right.

"No, no," she repeated breathlessly, "to burden yourself for life! It would be a weight to drag you down."

"It would be a light to guide me to the stars!"

"To know yourself pitied among men——"

His hand went out and closed over hers in a fierce, warm clasp.

"I have known that. And God knows how bitterly I have resented it! But if I am to be pitied," he laughed softly, "let me at least choose for what I shall be pitied. But listen—no, turn your face toward me—listen. *You have not yet said that you do not love me.* Therefore it yet remains to be known whether I *am* in very deed—to be pitied."

For a moment their palms lay close together. She twisted her fingers to free them and a wave of color ran to her temples. Suddenly her breath caught, and she gave a little broken cry that was half a laugh, half a sob.

"When one is tossed the key of paradise," she sighed in sweet surrender, "how ever *can* one toss it back again?"

When she leaned back her bright hair was against his cheek. He drew a strand of it across his lips, repeating Swinburne's "Rondel":

"With her own tresses I bound and found
her fair,
Kissing her hair.
What pain could get between my face and
hers?
What new, sweet thing would love not relish
worse?
Unless, perhaps, white death had kissed me
there—
Kissing her hair."

They spoke in hushed voices. They bared the depths of their souls to each other. The perfumed dusk gathered about them, and far down in the valley a mullied October haze sifted among the trees. The sky was losing its last memory of the day.

They sat in a long quiet, while through the outspread panorama of the hills the sun god dragged his crimson mantle into the gray of a deepening twilight.

"There is a brilliant sunset; I feel its glow on my face. I would like to see just *this one* out of my whole life." Then she sighed and lifted her face. "But we must be going; madame will miss me and be worried."

She got to her feet and stood pinning back her loosened hair. How it happened only the little god of evil chance may know! But suddenly she seemed to trip over the folds of her long gown.

As she swayed, her hands thrown blindly out, Dayton was between her and the cliff's edge in a flash, had thrown himself against her with the whole force of his body and the impetus of his sudden spring literally throwing her backward against the grassy bank.

The segment of rock on which he leaped gave way with a sudden sickening, swaying crunch, a yielding of its crumbling ledge. There came a tearing, crackling sound. The entire mass, save the narrow ledge where the girl clung, went down with a rumble and roar. The wall of the cañon threw back its echo like a sounding-board.

Dayton gave one cry, "Keep back! Keep back!" then tottered with the swaying rock and with upflung arms went down over the sheer declivity of the cliff.

She did not cry out, she scarcely seemed to breathe, as with one hand over her loudly beating heart she leaned over the narrow ledge. Her eyes stared into the gray shadows below, straining in sightless agony. Staring, almost protruding from their sockets—ghastly, horrible, their frightful staring strained after sight.

Suddenly she caught her hands to her throat and a strange cry broke from her. She laughed wildly and flung her arms up like a woman in some ecstasy of exultation. It was a shuddering laugh through which she cried: "Oh, God! I can see! I can see!"

Then she sank against the narrow ledge and for a moment all the world

went black. How long she lay there she never knew. She was conscious presently that the air was cooler; conscious of the odor of crushed sweet-fern near her face; conscious of a lightness and giddiness as of one on some great height. Then with a rush it swept into her memory. She felt her very lips grow cold. White-lipped and breathless, her eyes burning with their tortured stare, she leaned again above the ledge, peering down. That wild cry of thankfulness for sight was dead in her soul. What joy in that—when somewhere below, down there in those gray shadows, his mangled body lay among the rocks!

Slowly a benumbing horror crept upon her, a languor that was like death. Unless she shook it off . . . She got tremblingly to her feet. Then, inch by inch, clinging to the thick vines along the crevice and barely finding foothold, she dragged herself forward.

How she reached the broader ledge where the winding cattle-trail led to the village below she could never afterward clearly remember. Madame Richieu, conscience-stricken and appalled with a sense of her slack duenna duties, came upon her there a half-hour later, fallen face downward in the path.

III

HAD Dayton really gone, as the terrified girl believed, from the height of the shelving rock to the ragged beach below, this story would never have been written.

At a distance at somewhat half its height a jutting fragment of earth and stone and scrub pine pushed itself out from the slope of the declivity—a mere strip of earth like a suspended aerial shelf.

On this, with a great clatter of loosened stones and snapping twigs, Dayton caught and held, like Mohammed's coffin, suspended between earth and heaven. Torn and scratched and bleeding he found precarious foothold a moment and gradually drew himself up—by means of a ragged pine limb

and the fortunate possession of uncommonly strong wrist muscles.

Here, breathless, shaken and bruised, he clung against the stone wall.

Instantly the thought of the girl's peril flashed upon him.

He called her name with a wild thought of reassuring her as to his safety. His voice seemed deadened and lost in the great resounding hollows of the cañon. How, blind and helpless as she was, could she ever find her way back along that narrow strip of rock where one misstep . . . He grew cold and sick at the thought.

The hope that, numb with fright, she would remain on the ledge till a guiding hand came, was like an injected opiate in spite of which the heart beats on sickeningly. If only it were possible to reach the village and despatch someone!

Without further thought he swung himself out on a root of the stunted and twisted pine and began an exciting slide and scramble, catching here and there at ragged tufts and bushes, down the long rocky side of the cliff.

Afterward his memory of that wild descent was a hazy nightmare wherein his body with bruised and aching muscles bounded indiscriminately from stone to stone. He brought up at last, with a final fusillade of small stones and an accompanying shower of sand and loosened earth, among the broken stones at the foot of the cliff.

He got himself together with nothing worse to show for this rather unique method of descending a mountain-side than a wrenched ankle, decidedly disreputable-looking apparel and a general nerve-racking shaking-up.

"Guess I must have been born to be hung," he soliloquized, with a pained grin, rubbing his bruised shoulder gently and realizing this to be his second miraculous escape from death.

But when, by slow and painful stages, he finally reached the village, he found that he had already been reported a dead man, and that the "young mam'zelle" was safe at home.

"It is not the money she gives—the

young mam'zelle," said old Babette, bustling about the room where Dayton lay stretched with his bandaged ankle in a chair, "*mais*, no! It is something one remembers long after one has quite forgotten all about the money. Even to Grandmère Lemoine, who is near ninety, and is cross to the *bébés*, she has sent wine and a great chair with springs, in which one can stretch out like this—*regardez*, monsieur—same like a lazy lizard in the sun. To all the poor villagers she has sent gifts—ah, *mon Dieu*, such so grand gifts! as thankoffering for her restored sight. And ah, monsieur, *quel beaux yeux!*"

Dayton's shoulders scinged as if she were laying on a scourge; as if he were trying to writhe away from her words.

"*Bien*, but she has the gracious heart, the young mam'zelle," went on the garrulous, kindly voice. "Beyond a doubt it is the saints that have performed the miracle. The monsieur doctor who has been sent for from the city says no, it is not owing to the saints at all. He laughs. He is not himself of the Holy Church, the long-nosed monsieur doctor. He says many long words—*tenez!* I do not know the sense of such long words. I only know it is *le bon Dieu* and the saints who have done it. Of course the monsieur doctor must make wise shakes of the head, and words that mean nothing—*hein?*—that he may have the fat purse from mam'zelle. But—*que voulez-vous?*—one knows it is the saints in spite of all the monsieur doctor who puffs himself out same like a pouter pigeon and sways backward—so—on his toes and looks wise same like a cock sparrow. Much he knows about it! the fat English monsieur with his fat fingers stuffed into skin-gloves same like puffy brown sausages! One knows the saints *do* things like that, monsieur—for such as mam'zelle."

It was very near that dividing hour when today and tomorrow keep their time-worn, midnight tryst when Dayton, with a great deal of pain in his wrenched ankle and a much worse pain

in his heart, despatched this note to "the young mam'zelle."

It read:

Yesterday I learned of the great joy that has come to you. It is with a truthful but a very sore heart I am able to say—God be thanked for the restoration of that sight which has made the world a new world to you—and an empty one to me. For I need hardly say now how all that blissful future we talked and planned together—before I stepped too near the edge of that cliff—is changed now and is as if it had never been even dreamed of.

I have at any rate taken my life masterfully in hand and am going back to pick up the broken threads where I left them flying at loose ends, and make the best I can—God helping me—of the tangled skein. Never would I have been craven enough to have begged you to give your life into my keeping but that, because of your great affliction, you had seemed to be mine—through default.

But all that is changed now. There is one consolation only—nothing can hurt after this. Nature numbs one after a hurt like that and the heart grows callous. Please do not believe me making a weak-spirited plaint against fate nor playing upon the pity and compassion which I know your gentle heart is pouring out upon me.

I no longer question the puzzling problem of life. I only know I love you, that I shall always love you, and that I must give you up.

I am leaving by the little packet which passes here going down the river tomorrow night. You may judge me very weak of spirit and of purpose when I admit that I dare not trust myself to see you.

I am only mortal—a mere man with red blood in his veins and not a "haloed saint prating *paternosters*."

Remember it is always the homeliest bulldog who has the strongest affections and is so much more sensitive than he looks.

I know, God help me! how sweet your pity would be. And if, under the lash of a mistaken sense of duty, you were to offer me more than pity—who knows what cowardly sacrifice I might not be base enough to accept! Therefore I enact the rather unheroic rôle of "he who fights and runs away."

I beg you in all sincerity do not grieve over this unfruitful tossing of fate's dice in the game we call life. Remember only that I am a better man for having known you. Nothing can take from me the memory of these golden Autumn days we have been dreaming through together—when my soul sloughed its husk of bitterness and cynicism under the glow and inspiration of your bright courage.

Most blessed among mortals, I have been walking in the garden of your soul!

The memory of those days will always lift my sordid life a little nearer to the stars. Always I will have with me the memory of our twilight strolls, your face uplifted with that listening look—the consciousness of your dependence on my guidance thrilling through flesh and spirit. Always I will have with me the memory of those hours when, in the long silences between us, my soul attuned itself to the harmony of yours.

IV

It was a night of many stars, the sky a great dome encrusted with jewels.

The little freight packet whistled shrilly as the girl sped down the length of the beach and along the wobbling planks of the old dock with the speed of Atalanta distancing her lovers.

"I—I wish to speak to a friend on board," she panted breathlessly. "I am coming back," as she sped past the stolid boy by the plank who looked after her stupidly, not understanding.

Such a pretty girl, the young mam'zelle, with her cheeks crimson, her hair in loose tendrils about her face, her gray eyes wide and lustrous with excitement, and evidently in such a very great rush to get aboard.

With sleepy bovine eyes he watched her disappear into the dusk of the upper deck. Then he drew in the plank and signaled to the wheelman to move off.

Dayton, in the shadow of the pilot-house, stood looking off toward the starlit heights of the great cliffs. As he turned about he saw the girl coming toward him. His face blanched to a gray pallor. He caught a hand to the rail to steady himself.

"Did you get my letter?" he asked, his lips moving stiffly. The leash he held on himself ran cold even into his voice; it was like the nip of frost.

"Yes—oh, yes—t—that was why I came. I—I only got it the very last minute. I had to come because I had to t-talk to you, to tell you——"

She came close to him, all her soul in her eyes. The night wind had whipped out the short curls about her temples; her bosom rose with the hurried

breath of her mad race along the beach. Her lips were tremulous with that pathetic quiver which had so often moved Dayton to still them by the only method which seemed adequate.

"I—I had to come." Her eyes were fearless and brave. He had *known* they would have that seaglint in them. "Oh, how ever *could* you?" she broke out impetuously, "how ever *could* you?"

He half drew back from her; his face looked gaunt and drawn and his eyes seemed drinking the memory of her face into the waste places of his soul.

"Why did you come?"

Almost brutally he caught her wrists and held her from him. Her pulsing throat, her tremulous mouth were driving nails into his flesh.

"Look at me," he said coldly. "Look at me. A miserable, misshapen, wrecked body, doomed to drag through life——"

"Oh," she sobbed fiercely, her cheeks flaming to a deeper crimson, "do you think I loved your *body*? Has your soul changed just because my eyes are open to God's light of day? How *could* you think like that! Can't you understand how much more it makes me *love* you?"

Looking at her, a tremulous wonder came slowly into his eyes. Then slowly the wondering, the questioning grew into an ecstasy of revelation. But still in that cold, controlled voice he said:

"If—if it is only pity; if you have let your pity run away with your better judgment, I—I couldn't stand for that, you know, dear—when I found it out."

"Pity!" she said, and in such a voice. At that, and the look he turned upon her, she hid her face in the hollow of his shoulder and clung to him, suddenly breaking into long, shuddering sobs.

Chugging and churning noisily the little packet was making her way out into midstream.

The girl lifted her head in a panic of sudden dismay, her eyes tear-wet like flowers in dew.

"Why!" she laughed breathlessly, "they are leaving the dock! They are pulling out! And here I am without a cent of money or—or anything! Why, I'm running away with you! You *made* me do it, because—you wouldn't come and let me tell you——"

Something swept over his eyes as though a flame went through them.

She lifted her hands to her bare head and the blowing hair about her temples.

"Why, I haven't even a *hat*!"

"No matter about the hat," laughed Dayton rapturously, his lips to the cool velvet of her cheek, "no matter. We're sailing into paradise—on a freight packet—and they don't wear hats in paradise. No matter about the hat. Nothing matters now—only this."



PASSING SOULS

By Gertrude Huntington McGiffert

A CROSS the stars float fleecy clouds,
Past days, waiting in silver shrouds
For their brothers gathering apace.

And the shadow passing the gold moon's light
Is perchance a soul swept home tonight
Where the star-winds leave no trace.

FANTASY'S HOT FIRE

BEING TWELVE LETTERS OF CONFESSION FROM GABRIELLE TO MYRTLE

By Mary L. Pendered

I

"Fantasy's hot fire
Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly."—SCOTT.

DARLING MYRIE:

Yes, I know I'm a horror not to have answered your two lovely long letters before. Don't think I am ungrateful, dearest, or not interested in all your doings. I am—tremendously. But I've been going through such a time lately—one continual rush from week-end to week-end. You know how it is at Oaklands—a house full and something on every moment. It's simply impossible to write letters, even to one's *dearest* and most *valued* friends.

And not only that, but—Myrie—how can I tell you what has happened to me? Sweet as you are, I know you'll turn up that dear little nose of yours in scorn. No—I won't, *won't*, *WON'T* tell you—there! You'd think it horrid of me not only to do it, but even worse to write about it. What is it? I hear you asking. But no, I can't tell you—I hardly dare even think it to myself—it makes me so angry, and is altogether so idiotic—and insensate—and uncalled-for—and absurd, and, as Jack would say, "tommy-rotten"!

I will only tell you that I really haven't been able to collect my thoughts, dearest, for the last week or two, but I am sobering down now, and mean to spend the next half-hour in answering your dear, delightful letter.

I was very pleased to hear your news about Effie, and hope she will be *very*

happy. Lucky girl! to get the man she has set her heart upon. How I envy her! In this cruel world love matches are only too rare. The *right* man hardly ever falls in love with one. It is always some crock one doesn't want, who hangs on and on till one has to marry him in the end. I suppose there are very few girls whose dearest longing of the heart is fulfilled. Heigho! I wonder what's the good of living! I am tired of it all. . . . Oh, bother! there goes the gong for luncheon, and I sha'n't have a minute afterward. So good-bye, my beloved Myrrh, and mind, you are never, *never* to ask what "it" is that I have done.

Your always loving little goose of a
GAY.

II

MYRTLE DEAR, your laconic note made me laugh consumedly. "I've drawn my own conclusion about 'it'; now please tell me by return who *he* is," you say. Clever old darling! You've got right there at one shot. I might have known you would. But isn't it absurd, idiotic and humiliating to a maddening degree? You know that ever since I came out I've had the best of times, and several *almost* eligible swains have done me the honor to seek my hand in marriage (as they used to say in the olden days). Well, it has been very exciting. I've never cared enough for one to feel more than a passing pang at rejecting him. And now to make a fool of myself—to "fall in love" like a dairymaid in a

musical comedy—it's really too revolting.

But hear my case first, and perhaps you'll deal leniently with me.

Myrtle, he's a *demigod*, a positive Apollo, Adonis and Hermes in one! How can I describe him? Tall and straight as an arrow, strong as a Hercules, handsome as any god of Olympus, with just the sweetest, dearest smile you ever saw, a voice that tears holes in one's heart, and a manner—well, words fail me! You know I've always said that the *first* thing I *must* have in a man is *good form*. I don't care how handsome or clever or rich he is, if he hasn't that unspeakable charm which is the heritage of generations of patrician ancestors. If he isn't always sure of doing *exactly* the right thing at the right moment, I let him up; as Jack would say, "He is not for Gabrielle Demaine." I like everything a man does and says to seem inevitable—the only thing that a gentleman could do or say on a given occasion.

Well, Captain Whittenhall is the pink of perfection in manners. He has dignity without being stiff, ease without being free and easy. And oh, Myrie, he waltzes like a—like the guardsman he is—one can't say more. And if you saw him in his mess kit, with the scarlet showing up the lovely bronze of his skin (he has recently been quartered in Egypt) and that bronze bringing out all the sapphire blue in his eyes, you would rave about him as I do—I know you would, though you always refuse to admire fair men. I must admit I always preferred dark ones before—there always seemed so much more of the devil in them—I mean fire and dash. But Captain Whittenhall has eyes that positively *speak*, and the little crinkle in his fair hair is too heavenly for words.

The horrible and humiliating part of it all is that I'm afraid he doesn't care for me. He is an awful flirt, so I am told, and, although he has paid me a good deal of attention, it may be only his way with a new girl, and I am new to him, you see. The others are very

cattish to me, telling me everything they can about his other flirtations and all pretending he has made love to them in turn. But of course I merely laugh and swear I am only amusing myself with him, that I don't care twopence about him.

Amusing myself! When I adore the very teacup his hand has touched and would cheerfully become a teacup myself to be touched by him. Idiot! fool! degraded wretch that I am! But my head positively swims when he comes into the room—it does indeed, Myrie. Do pity me, darling. It's the first and only time. And I can't help it. I suppose it's the Spanish strain in me working out. Spanish women love with all their hearts and souls, I've heard.

Now, adieu, darling. Don't laugh at

Your poor little lovesick friend,

GAY.

III

MYRIE, I believe I am going mad! A girl has come here named Lilian Reay, and there's something between her and Captain Whittenhall—I know there is. When they were introduced she said, "Oh, Captain Whittenhall and I are quite old friends," and gave him *such* a look! I caught him glancing her way ever so many times when he was talking to me, and when I asked him how long he had known her he answered, "I really can't remember," with overdone indifference. I am getting a perfect *cat*, for I rejoice when anybody says anything nasty about her, and it gave me quite a thrill of pleasure to hear Mrs. Morland remark that Lilian Reay must be over thirty, if a day. Isn't it evil to feel so about a woman who has done one no harm? Isn't it horrible to be jealous at all? But how can one help it, when one loves, adores and idolizes a man to distraction? I want him more than anything else in the world; I would give ten years of my life to hear him say, "I love you"; and it simply maddens

me when he looks at any other girl as if he had a special and private interest in her.

There! by this time I shall have utterly disgusted and sickened you. I won't write another word on the subject, which shall be closed between us forever. I know Captain Whittenhall doesn't care a scrap for me, except in a flirty way, and I'm not going to wear my heart out for him.

Your shamed and miserable

GABRIELLE.

IV

It's all over, darling. He's engaged! I've cried till I am quite ill and my eyes are swollen out of my head. There seems to be nothing left in the world for

Your heartbroken

G. D.

V

MYRTLE! Myrtle! Myrtle! Will you believe it? I am engaged—actually and positively engaged to Philip Whittenhall, and the happiest girl in the whole world! It was a false report—what I told you in my last letter about his being engaged. He says he has never really cared for any other girl but me. Isn't it *too* lovely? I have to pinch myself sometimes, to be sure that I'm awake and it is not all a glorious, heavenly dream. Oh, Myrie, he's such a darling, and he has given me such an exquisite ring—a large emerald set in diamonds. We're to be married in the Spring. He says he can't wait a moment longer than the last day of April. As for me, you may imagine whether I want to wait any longer! To be married to the *one and only* man in the whole world must be perfect bliss, and I shall count the hours to our wedding day.

He declares that he took a fancy to me the very first minute he saw me, and it was my *cleverness* that attracted him most, though he has the bad taste

to think me "very pretty." He says he is not clever himself, and perhaps he isn't exactly bookish, but I don't want that kind of thing in a man; do you? It is enough that he is just a *man*, one to lean on all through life, a great, strong, brave, sensible man, with no nonsense about him. I don't think I could stand one who spouted poetry or talked about Art with a capital A. Philip isn't a bit like that. He talks about people and things, about sport and the theatres and the news of the day—and *me*. Not that he talks much anyhow; but everything he says or does seems perfect. Oh, I am *so* happy, darling! I wish you could be as happy. I wish everyone could, and am sorry for the poor girls who never get their hearts' desire. Mine aches for them. Write very soon. I long to introduce Philip to you. But you mustn't fall in love with him.

Your ecstatic and glorified little

GAY.

VI

So many thanks, dearest, for your kind letter and congratulations. I am having a busy time acknowledging the felicitations that pour in from all sides. Everyone seems to think I am a very lucky girl, as indeed I am. Philip is such a dear! He sends me lovely flowers nearly every day, and sometimes books, though I must say his choice in them is rather funny. But then a man never has the same tastes as a woman. Excuse short note, dear, as I've such heaps of things to do, and Philip is taking me to the opera to-night.

Yours,

GAY.

VII

DEAREST MYRRH:

Can it really be a whole month since your last awfully nice letter came? What a wretch I am! But my time has been tremendously taken up with

the theatricals at Wilton Park. We've had such fun over them, rehearsing, etc., and I scored quite a nice little hit as Fanny Hardcastle.

Philip wasn't in it. He doesn't like acting, so he only hung about the wings, glowering at the men who made stage love to me. It is very silly, in my opinion, for anyone to take stage love-making seriously; but Philip is built that way.

I suppose he can't help it, but it made me feel very foolish when he scowled at Mr. Etherington, who played Hastings, and sulked all through dinner because I laughed at him. I love acting, as you know, and it seems a pity I shall never be able to enjoy it without Philip's spoiling all the fun. His glum face and air of virtuous disapproval would spoil new milk. However, I hope to break him of this soon. I've accepted the part of Rosalind in Mrs. Morland's theatricals for her Blanket Fund, at Christmas, and if Philip objects, I can't help it. One may be in love with a man and yet not be his slave. I will be slave to no man, not even Philip.

No time for more now, darling.

Yours ever,

GABRIELLE.

VIII

MYRTIE DEAR, I'm so worried. Philip has cut up rough about the Morland theatricals, and says I must give them up. This I flatly decline to do. Result—row royal! Why should I give up what affords me intense enjoyment just because he doesn't happen to enjoy the same thing? I don't interfere with his pleasure, though the things he likes always bore me frightfully. I've shivered through football matches and yawned through silly musical comedies to please him; yet when I get a chance of playing Rosalind, a part I've always longed to play, he puts his foot down and says that if I value his affection and esteem I shall give it up. Not that he knows in the least who Rosalind is. He has heard

of Shakespeare, of course, and "As You Like It," but I'm sure he doesn't know any more about Rosalind than the man in the moon!

In all my life I've never met anyone who has read so little as Philip. It is difficult to believe that he went to Rugby and Oxford. Anyhow, he seems to have sedulously tried to forget all he ever learned there! But please don't think, darling, I am saying anything against Philip. Of course we are very fond of each other and have quite happy times together—now and then. It is always a pleasure to go out with him, as he has such perfect manners and everyone likes him. He always knows exactly what to do at the right moment. And one cannot help feeling proud of having such an extremely handsome man in tow. To see other girls look at him, and other men, too, is *most* amusing. He's a good fellow and gives me lovely presents. The other day he brought me one of those delicious uncut turquoise necklets—a perfect dream. I should miss him frightfully. But I do wish he were a *little* more reasonable on the subject of acting. Amateurs so seldom get a chance of playing Shakespeare that I really can't give this up.

Don't tell a soul what I've written, will you, pet?

Your always loving

GAY.

IX

DARLING MYRIE:

It is such a relief to sit down to a nice, long chat on paper with you after being bored almost to distraction by two hours of Philip's undiluted society. He is never very entertaining, and we exhausted long ago all the topics of conversation in which he is interested, except *himself*, which is a topic we have discussed *ad nauseam*, till I am weary of it. But I can generally make some kind of talk with him, in the ordinary way, however tame, when he is in a fairly good humor. Tonight he was

not. He is savage because I won't give up the part of Rosalind, and someone has told him it has to be played in a boy's dress, which he thinks improper—for his *fiancée*. Of course the impropriety of rows of half-clad chorus girls delights him, and he keeps his opera-glass glued to his eyes the whole time they are on—but no matter!

Well, he put on that awful virtuous-disapproval air I've spoken of before, and sulked steadily, replying to everything I said with a monosyllable and never smiling, though I racked my brains for silly jokes to please him.

Unfortunately, because we are engaged, everybody avoids us like poison. I *longed* for a third person present! It is very absurd—this fashion of always leaving engaged couples to bore each other.

By the way, I often wonder what I ever saw in Philip that I thought so superior to other men. He is good-looking, certainly, but not so very handsome, and decidedly heavy. I always did think fair men rather insipid and my natural taste was for dark ones, though I am dark myself. I can't think why I changed my mind. Philip isn't brilliant in any way. His conversation, at its best, is the dullest of the dull and it has to be a *very* pointed joke that he can see at once. He never reads anything but the sporting papers and the *Mail*; even the *Morning Post* is too "stodgy" for him; he always goes to sleep at a concert, or really good play—he did at "Man and Superman"—think of it!—and he simply *couldn't* read "In the Days of the Comet," which I gave him in an *édition de luxe* for his birthday—he said it was too slow for him. Fancy, Myrrh—Wells too slow! He likes the most piffling stuff that I couldn't read to save my life.

Oh, my dearest girl, be thankful you are not engaged to a man who bores you to death. My jaws ache with yawning, and the effect is upon me still. I'm too sleepy to write any more.

Your always loving little pal,

GAY.

X

MYRIE, do you think it very wicked and horrid for a girl to break her troth when she has once plighted it? I'm afraid you'll say yes, as I know your strict ideas about honor and so forth. But oh, my dearest, surely there are extenuating circumstances. It can't be right to marry a man with whom one has positively *nothing* in common. Sometimes I look at Philip and listen to his monotonous voice till I almost detest him, and think of having to see him opposite me, and hear him talk to the end of my days! How I could ever have fallen in love with him is a mystery. It seems now like some baleful spell laid upon me, such as Puck laid upon Titania, making her wake to worship a clown. Was it love at all, I wonder? Can love change so quickly? If so, the poets must be all wrong, including Shakespeare, who said:

"Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,"

and Scott who called true love "the secret sympathy." Mine could only have been the "fantasy's hot fire" that so quickly dies down to gray ashes. And yet it seemed so real. Oh, dear Myrie, what a truly deceitful, miserable world we live in! Do advise me what to do. I will try to take your advice, though it kill me. For I really want to do what is best and right, if I am, as you call me, a firefly.

Your very wretched

GABRIELLE.

XI

MYRTLE DEAR:

Your very beautiful letter has gone straight to my heart and fired my soul and conscience. Of course you are right. I ought to have known my own mind before venturing on an engagement for life, and now that I have given my word I cannot break it without perjuring myself. If, as you say, I destroy Philip's faith in woman's truth and goodness, I may be doing him

an irreparable injury and spreading incalculable mischief. So I've made up my mind to follow your advice and try to like him—I can't say "love," because that is dead forever. We can, however, be friends, and I mean to be a good wife to him when we are married. To show that I am in earnest, I have written to Mrs. Morland asking her to find someone else to play Rosalind in her theatricals.

Now do write and praise me for being such a good girl. I seem to need somebody's praise, for I feel very sore and buffeted, as if I had been through an awful storm. So I have—a storm of emotion!

Oh, Myrie! to think of sitting opposite him at breakfast every morning for the rest of my life! Do pity me. But how can you, when you don't know what he is like, have never been bored by him!

I have cried myself to sleep the last two nights. It's frightfully silly, of course, but I had learned all Rosalind's exquisite lines and I did *love* acting her. I shall simply *hate* the girl who takes my place.

Good night, dear. I wish you could feel as I do; but you can't. You can only see what is *right*. I see what I *want*—and that is just the opposite!

Your unhappy friend,

GABRIELLE.

XII

Joy! Joy! joy wassail! I am free, *free*, FREE! Now don't be shocked, Myrie. I've done nothing dishonorable. Philip asked me last night if I thought we could be happy together, and I had to answer candidly, "No."

At that he drew a breath of relief—I heard it distinctly—and said he had felt for a long time that we were unsuited to each other, but that he should not dream of breaking off an engagement unless I really wished it. He was quite sensible and really showed his good side. I tried to conceal my delight, so far as possible, and said that I did not wish to stand in the way of his marrying some girl who would be all he desired in a wife. In fact, we both made very nice and proper speeches to each other and parted the best of friends. He is an awfully nice fellow—in some ways—and will, I am sure, make an excellent husband to some girl *who can stand him*. No doubt there are plenty who would adore him for his face, figure and manners, as I did—at first.

I have wired to Mrs. Morland and do hope the part of Rosalind is not filled up. You can't think how happy I am. It seems as if the whole world is *en fête* and I am so idiotically excited that I go about with a broad smile on my face and people turn to look after me in the streets, thinking I'm an escaped lunatic.

Vive la liberté! I believe if the monarch of the whole earth offered me marriage tomorrow I would reject him "with much contempt and loathing"—like the virtuous periwinkle-seller in Gilbert's poem. For it is so lovely to feel no yoke on one's shoulders, after it has been pressing one down for months. Congratulate me once more, Myrie dear, this time on my—*disengagement*.

Your very happy little friend,

GAY.

(Oh, so Gay!)



BUT HE GETS THERE

MRS. ASKIT—Does he mingle with the best society?

MRS. KNOCKEM—No; he just elbows, pushes and shoves.

L'ALIBI

Par Tristan Bernard

A MAITRE LE GÉVAUDAN, AVOCAT A LA
COUR D'APPEL DE PARIS

NOUMÉA 7 février, 1897.

MAITRE, Voici le récit complet des événements dont je vous parlais dans ma dernière lettre. Vous y trouverez tous les renseignements nécessaires pour votre dossier.

Notez d'abord que je m'appelle Pierre-Louis Brond, que j'ai trente-neuf ans depuis le 1^{er} décembre et que je suis né à Lyon. J'ai perdu ma mère quand j'étais tout enfant. Mon père, qui tenait une petite épicerie dans ma ville natale, est mort il y a environ dix-huit mois. J'ai une sœur qui est mariée à Lyon.

Depuis l'âge de dix-neuf ans, j'étais brouillé avec ma famille. J'ai été employé aux écritures dans diverses maisons, mauvais employé, j'étais paresseux, et j'arrivais tard au bureau. Aussi de 1880 à 1885, me suis-je trouvé sans place. J'ai vécu d'expédients, de paris aux courses. J'ai vendu des journaux et distribué des prospectus. Mais les agences de publicité m'employaient peu, parce que mes vêtements étaient vraiment trop minables. Et puis je n'aimais pas me lever matin.

Aux courses, j'avais fait la connaissance de deux bonneteurs, Henri et Jules, et de leur amie, une petite fille de dix-huit ans, qu'on appelait la Poire. Henri et Jules cambriolaient dans la banlieue. Ils m'associèrent à deux de leurs expéditions. Ils dévalisèrent deux villas: une à Billancourt, et une à Auteuil. Je faisais le guet devant la grille. La Poire était à cent mètres de

là, au tournant d'une rue. Elle allait de long en large, soi-disant pour accoster les passants. Elle faisait le guet, elle aussi, et retenait, par des plaisanteries, les sergents de ville.

Pour prix de mes services, Henri et Jules me donnèrent des sommes dérisoires, une fois trente sous, et l'autre fois quarante-huit sous. Aussi l'idée me vint-elle d'opérer à mon compte.

J'habitais depuis le mois de juillet 1884, rue Bédex, près de la porte d'Aubervilliers, dans un hôtel de misérable apparence, qui s'intitulait, je ne sais pourquoi, Hôtel des Fondateurs. Il n'y venait que des filles et des déchargeurs de bateaux.

Le mois de mars de 1885 fut chaud et sans pluie. L'après-midi, je m'en allais en exploration dans la grande banlieue, du côté de l'ouest, passé Saint-Germain. Parfois j'étais trop fatigué pour rentrer à Paris: je restais couché dans la campagne, dans une gare ou sous un apprentis.

J'entrais dans les villas pour demander la charité, et surtout pour faire une enquête sur le nombre des habitants. On me renvoyait le plus souvent. Mais, visitant une quantité de maisons dans ma journée, j'avais toujours à la fin une dizaine de sous d'aumônes, et beaucoup de pain rassis. J'en mangeais le plus que je pouvais; je distribuais mon superflu à des vagabonds; j'offrais des croûtes aux chiens errants et j'émiettai la mie à des oiseaux.

Parfois, la servante du logis avait l'imprudence de me laisser seul dans la cuisine. Mais il était rare qu'un objet facile à dissimuler se trouvât sous ma main. Un jour seulement, je ra-

massai une petite jatte de grès, que je vendis un sou à un autre mendiant.

Enfin, une après-midi, à Écueil, près de Poissy, une vieille dame me reçut avec bienveillance. Elle était courte, très grosse, et n'avait presque pas de cheveux. Elle s'occupait d'œuvres de charité et me parla longuement : elle me conseilla de m'adresser de sa part à une société de Paris qui procurait du travail. Elle me parlait dans sa cuisine, où une bonne, grosse comme sa maîtresse et plus courte encore, épluchait des légumes. Pendant tous les discours de la dame tout en hochant la tête avec complaisance, je regardais autour de moi. Il n'y avait pas de verrou de sûreté à la porte d'entrée. La grille du jardin était basse. Les maisons voisines étaient inhabitées. Sur les cent sous que me remit la dame, j'achetai un couteau à virole.

Je résolus d'agir sans retard. Il était trois heures (c'était le 21 mars), quand je quittai la maison d'Écueil. Je pris le train à Poissy pour Paris et j'arrivai à mon hôtel vers sept heures du soir. Je demandai ostensiblement un bougeoir à la patronne et je lui dis que j'allais me coucher.

Je restai dans ma chambre jusqu'à huit heures et demie. J'avais dans un tiroir une pince-monseigneur rouillée et un long crochet. Henri le bonneteur m'avait fait cadeau de ces deux outils, et, un soir, sur la serrure de ma chambre, il m'avait montré la façon de m'en servir.

Je descendis donc à huit heures et demie : je savais qu'à ce moment le garçon d'hôtel et la patronne étaient à diner, et qu'il n'y avait plus personne dans la petite loge qui s'ouvrait sur le couloir.

J'eus la pensée de me rendre à Poissy à pied pour éviter les témoignages possibles des employés de gares. Mais ne m'étais-je pas créé un alibi suffisant ? Et d'ailleurs, j'aimais mieux encourir ce risque que d'affronter les quatre heures de route qui m'étaient nécessaires pour gagner Poissy.

Je pris donc le train de neuf heures quarante à la gare Saint-Lazare. A dix heures trente-cinq, je descendis à

Poissy. J'avais un quart d'heure de chemin pour parvenir jusqu'à la maison d'Écueil. Quand j'y arrivai, je vis qu'une fenêtre était éclairée au rez-de-chaussée et qu'une persienne, au premier étage, se rayait de lumière. La bonne était encore à la cuisine et la maîtresse était dans sa chambre. Je m'éloignai pendant quelques minutes. A mon retour, la fenêtre du rez-de-chaussée était éteinte, mais la fenêtre du premier était toujours éclairée, ainsi qu'une petite lucarne au second. La bonne était en train de se coucher. Je remontai pour passer le temps jusqu'au prochain coude de la route. Puis je revins jusqu'à la grille. Comme une horloge sonnait onze heures et demie, je vis en passant devant la maison que la lucarne de la bonne ne brillait plus. Mais la persienne du premier étage était toujours rayée de lumière : la vieille dame devait lire dans son lit. Minuit sonna, et minuit et demi, sans que disparût la lumière protectrice. Je ne quittais plus la grille et j'épiais la fenêtre. Allait-elle luire toute la nuit, allais-je être forcé—et vraiment je le souhaitais peut-être—de revenir sur mes pas, à ma vie misérable et tranquille ?

Je ne pouvais plus croire que la fenêtre s'éteindrait. Je ne guettais plus dans le silence que l'avertissement prochain du clocher, qui allait sonner une heure. Mes yeux néanmoins restaient fixés sur la façade. Soudain je me sentis tressaillir. La fenêtre s'était éteinte brusquement, comme un œil qui se ferme, en signe d'acquiescement.

J'attendis encore une dizaine de minutes : il fallait que la vieille dame s'endormît tout à fait. Enfin j'escaladai la grille et je sautai dans le jardin.

Le sol discret ne criait pas sous les semelles trouées et amincies de mes bottines. J'arrivai jusqu'à la porte d'entrée. J'introduisis dans la serrure mon long crochet rouillé. La serrure joua très bien : la porte s'ouvrit et je pénétrai dans la petite antichambre, d'où un escalier tournant montait au premier étage.

J'ôtai alors ma veste et mon gilet :

ainsi le sang ne rejaillirait que sur ma chemise. Puis j'allumai un petit bout de bougie que j'avais emporté dans ma poche. Je l'avais saisi dans la main gauche entre le pouce et l'index; dans l'autre main, je tenais mon couteau à virole, grand ouvert.

Comme j'arrivais en silence au haut de l'escalier, quelqu'un dans la maison parla. Je pensai que c'était la voix de la vieille dame. Elle demanda :

— C'est vous, Jeanne?

Je répondis à demi-voix :

— Oui!

J'espérais que, rassurée, elle allait se rendormir. S'inquiéta-t-elle cependant d'entendre sa bonne descendre à cette heure tardive? J'avais éteint ma bougie, et je restai debout contre la rampe, retenant mon souffle. Soudain la lumière envahit le palier. La porte, devant moi, s'était ouverte, et la vieille dame, en toilette de nuit, était apparue, un bougeoir à la main, dans l'embrasure. Je fis un pas en avant et frappai devant moi, presque au hasard. La grosse femme tomba à terre en travers de la porte, en poussant un cri mince, comme un cri d'enfant.

Le bougeoir qu'elle tenait à la main s'éteignit en roulant. Je cherchais dans l'obscurité mon bout de bougie, lorsque j'entendis grincer une porte, à l'étage au-dessus. L'escalier s'éclaira faiblement par en haut. Un pas lourd descendit les marches. Effacé contre le mur, je vis arriver à moi la bonne de la vieille dame. Elle avait une chemise blanche et une jupe rouge. Elle tenait à la main une petite lampe dont la lumière fit sortir de l'ombre mon visage, que je sentais tout rouge et tout en sueur.

La bonne eut un mouvement de recul. Elle m'avait certainement reconnu. Je vois très bien sa grosse figure douce. Elle posa la lampe à terre et joignit les mains. Je la frappai de mon couteau à l'épaule. Elle tomba, sans crier, sur les marches.

Je pris alors la lampe et j'entrai dans la chambre de la vieille dame, en enjambant le corps.

La porte d'un petit secrétaire frac-turée, je découvris dans un tiroir deux

billets de cent francs et cent dix francs en pièces d'or. J'y vis quelques bijoux sans valeur, un collier de corail, une vieille alliance tout usée. Ces objets-là pouvaient me compromettre: je pris l'argent et laissai les bijoux.

A ce moment, la vieille dame poussa un gémissement, une plainte douce. Où avais-je mis mon couteau à virole? En portant les yeux autour de moi, je vis, sur un petit guéridon, un poignard à lame courte et large. Le manche en était en métal très lourd, richement incrusté de pierres brillantes. Je saisis ce poignard, je l'enfonçai dans le cou de la vieille dame. Puis, après avoir essuyé la lame sur le tapis, je mis l'arme, qui me paraissait précieuse, dans ma poche.

Je descendis l'escalier avec précaution. En bas, je soufflai la lampe, je remis mon gilet et mon paletot, que j'avais accrochés à la pomme de la rampe. Puis, je quittai la maison après avoir refermé la porte avec soin.

Il soufflait un petit vent frais. La rue était toujours déserte. J'escaladai la grille et je me dirigeai du côté de la gare. Il était trois heures moins vingt à l'horloge. Je lus l'horaire des trains sur une affiche: le premier train pour Paris passait à cinq heures vingt, je résolus de l'aller prendre à la station précédente, à quatre kilomètres de là. Voilà qui détournerait les soupçons.

Avant de me mettre en route, je m'arrêtai un instant au bord du chemin. J'écartai mon gilet et ma veste, et je constatai que ma chemise était ensanglantée. J'avais également une petite tache sombre sur mon pantalon, mais elle ne se remarquait pas.

Rien, selon moi, ne pourrait me faire soupçonner. La patronne de l'hôtel m'avait vu monter chez moi la veille pour me coucher. Je rentrerais à l'hôtel sur le coup de neuf heures. Personne ne m'apercevrait: à ce moment, la patronne était aux provisions, les déchargeurs de bateaux étaient partis depuis l'aube, et les filles étaient encore couchées.

A propos de rien, je me mis à claquer des dents. C'était sans doute le froid. Alors, comme je fourrais mes mains

dans mes poches, je sentis le manche incrusté du poignard qui m'avait servi à achever la vieille dame. C'était là un objet compromettant et dont je n'arriverais pas, malgré sa valeur, à tirer un bon prix: mieux valait le jeter quelque part. J'avisai, non loin de la gare, un puits abandonné. Je l'y laissai tomber, et m'éloignai.

Tout en marchant, je calculais ce que m'avait rapporté mon crime: exactement trois cent dix francs. Après les piteux résultats de mon association avec les bonneteurs, cette somme me paraissait satisfaisante. J'avais pourtant accompli là un dur métier, avec de gros risques, des dangers graves. J'ai beaucoup réfléchi là-dessus par la suite, et je pense que le meilleur frein pour retenir les criminels et les détourner du crime, c'est encore l'aléa et le peu de profit de ces sortes d'affaires.

A peine monté dans le train, je m'endormis. Et, presque aussitôt je me réveillai à la gare Saint-Lazare, dans le jour maussade, la bouche pâteuse, brisé de fatigue. Il était six heures et demie. J'allai prendre quelque nourriture dans une crèmerie. Je remontai tout doucement vers la rue Bédex. Dans une chemiserie du boulevard extérieur, je fis l'emplette, vers huit heures, d'une chemise de cretonne, pour remplacer celle que j'avais sur moi, et qui était tachée de sang. Je me souviens aussi que j'achetai les livraisons d'un roman illustré dont on avait distribué pour rien les seize premières pages.

J'avais résolu de passer la journée dans mon lit, à me reposer et à lire. C'était surtout dans cette idée que j'avais volé et tué: pour n'avoir plus rien à faire, pour rester couché toute la journée. Mais, à cette heure, possesseur d'un petit magot, j'avais des velléités d'économie, je voulais ne pas trop l'entamer: dès le lendemain, je chercherais du travail.

Tout à ces réflexions, j'arrivai à l'angle de la rue Bédex et de la rue d'Aubervilliers. Mon logis était à quatre ou cinq maisons de là. Mais alors se présenta un spectacle très inquiétant.

Un rassemblement s'était formé devant l'Hôtel des Fondateurs; il y avait bien là une cinquantaine de personnes. Je vis une voiture et plusieurs sergents de ville. Toutes sortes d'idées me traversèrent la tête en quelques secondes. On était, sans nul doute, entré là-bas dans la maison de la vieille dame. J'avais peut-être laissé tomber, en retirant ma veste, une enveloppe. On avait fait jouer le télégraphe. . . . Enfin j'étais découvert. C'était clair.

Je fis instinctivement un pas en arrière et m'apprêtai à rebrousser chemin. Un petit homme à barbe noire, vêtu d'un chapeau de feutre et d'un pardessus marron, se dressa devant moi.

— Vous êtes Pierre Brond?

Je ne répondis rien.

— Je vous arrête.

Il fit signe à deux sergents de ville, qui me prirent chacun par un bras.

On me conduisit jusqu'à la porte de l'hôtel. Les agents qui se trouvaient là écartèrent la foule. Au milieu de vives clameurs, j'entrai dans la maison.

L'inspecteur qui m'avait arrêté s'adressa alors à un monsieur qui se trouvait dans la loge de la patronne:

— Je le tiens.

L'autre répondit:

— Faites-le monter.

Je n'avais pas soufflé mot depuis mon arrestation. On me fit monter au premier étage et on me poussa dans une chambre. Le corps d'une jeune femme était étendu sur le lit.

Je ne puis dire exactement ce que j'éprouvai à cette vue. J'avais les idées brouillées comme dans un rêve. Ce cadavre n'était pas le cadavre de ma victime. Ce crime n'était pas le mien. Je crois que j'eus une bonne contenance. Je restai ahuri et calme, peut-être plus calme qu'il n'eût fallu. Je fis, au bout d'un moment, cette question simple et un peu tardive:

— Pourquoi m'arrêtez-vous?

Et j'ajoutai:

— Quelle est cette femme?

Un monsieur à barbe grise, en chapeau haut de forme, se trouvait là. On lui remit le paquet qu'on avait saisi sur moi au moment de mon arrestation;

c'était la chemise de cretonne que je venais d'acheter.

— Emmenez-le à côté, dit le monsieur à barbe grise, fouillez-le et déshabillez-le.

En me fouillant, on trouva dans mes poches près de trois cents francs et l'on aperçut de larges taches de sang sur ma chemise. On rapporta ces faits au commissaire. Puis on me conduisit au Dépôt.

Au cours de l'instruction, j'appris, détail par détail, le crime dont on m'accusait d'être l'auteur. Vers minuit, la patronne avait entendu au-dessus de sa tête un bruit de meubles remués. Peu après, quelqu'un était descendu et avait demandé le cordon. Puis des plaintes, des gémissements s'étaient fait entendre en haut. Le garçon d'hôtel s'était levé. Une porte du premier étage se trouvait entre-bâillée: le corps d'une fille qui habitait l'hôtel gisait à terre. Les tiroirs de la commode étaient ouverts. Le matelas était éventré.

Parmi les locataires de l'hôtel, accourus tous aux cris du garçon, comment remarqua-t-on mon absence? La patronne était bien sûre que j'étais rentré la veille à l'hôtel. D'autre part, elle ne sut dire si la fille tuée était, la veille au soir, rentrée seule, ou accompagnée. On alla frapper à ma porte: rien ne répondit. On ouvrit ma porte avec un passe-partout: ma chambre était vide. Or, même dans cette maison louche, mes mauvaises fréquentations n'avaient point passé inaperçues. Henri le bonneteur avait sa réputation établie dans le quartier. Quand le commissaire arriva, tout ce monde avait son opinion faite: l'assassin, c'était Pierre Brond, et mon signalement fut donné aux agents.

Il arrive fréquemment, on le sait, qu'une espèce de curiosité perverse ramène les assassins sur le lieu du crime: c'est ce qu'avait escompté l'inspecteur en faisant surveiller les abords de l'hôtel.

Devant le juge instructeur, je niai obstinément, mais l'argent qu'on avait trouvé sur moi, mais les taches de sang de ma chemise constituaient des charges

accablantes. Et quand le magistrat me demandait: "Où étiez-vous pendant la nuit du 21 au 22 mars si vous n'étiez pas à l'Hôtel des Fondeurs?" je ne pouvais pourtant pas lui répondre qu'au moment précis où l'on tuait ma voisine d'hôtel, j'assassinais deux autres femmes à huit lieues de Paris, entre Poissy et Orgeval.

Mon crime supposé ne fit pas de bruit dans la presse. L'assassinat d'une fille dans un hôtel borgne, le peu de mystère qui avait plané sur cette affaire, il n'y avait rien là qui pût retenir l'attention publique. Par contre, j'ai su que mon vrai crime, celui dont j'étais l'auteur anonyme, avait soulevé beaucoup d'émotion. J'ai appris que ma victime était la veuve d'un sculpteur célèbre. J'ai appris encore que la servante avait survécu à sa blessure. Revenue à elle, elle avait donné de mon agression un récit très détaillé et très exact. Elle m'avait parfaitement reconnu pour le vagabond qui, l'après-midi même, était venu demander la charité. Elle fournissait de moi un signalement complet, et je fus recherché partout, sauf à la Conciergerie. J'appris également—retenez ce détail—qu'on avait remarqué la disparition du poignard à manche incrusté, à lame large et courte, avec lequel j'avais achevé la victime et que j'avais jeté au fond du puits.

Je comparus devant la Cour d'assises. Faute de pouvoir fournir un alibi, ma condamnation semblait certaine. Je fus sur le point d'avouer mon véritable crime. Mais je résolus de ne parler qu'en cas de condamnation à mort. Mes dénégations impressionnèrent les jurés: ils m'accordèrent des circonstances atténuantes; je fus condamné aux travaux forcés à perpétuité.

Je vous écris donc de la Nouvelle, où je suis depuis onze ans. Ma conduite n'a pas été mauvaise. Je suis commis aux écritures, à l'économat du pénitencier. Je ne me trouve pas trop malheureux. Mais j'ai un grand désir de rentrer en France. La loi m'en fournit le droit et je veux en profiter.

Je m'explique: le dernier acte judiciaire concernant le crime d'Écueil

porte la date du 10 août 1886. (Un de mes camarades, employé au parquet de Paris, m'a fourni ce renseignement très sûr.) *La prescription m'est donc acquise, aux termes de la loi, et je fais valoir aujourd'hui l'alibi que je ne pouvais invoquer jadis.* J'établirai que je n'ai pu être l'auteur du crime de la rue Bédex, puisque, cette même nuit du 21 au 22 mars 1885, j'étais, à huit lieues de là, en train de commettre le crime d'Écueil. La servante que j'ai blessée m'a reconnu et me reconnaîtra encore, car j'ai très peu changé. Elle est aujourd'hui concierge à Neuilly, je vous donnerai son adresse. On retrouvera cer-

tainement, au fond du puits abandonné, près de la gare, le poignard au manche incrusté, que j'y ai jeté voilà tantôt douze ans.

Je puis donc obtenir la revision de mon procès, en fournissant du même coup la preuve de mon innocence dans le crime que j'expie injustement et celle de ma culpabilité dans le crime impuni. J'espère, monsieur l'avocat, que vous voudrez bien vous charger de mon affaire, et me répondre à ce sujet par le prochain courrier.

PIERRE-LOUIS BROND,

Employé à l'économat du Penitencier, à Nouméa (Nouvelle Calédonie).



THE COWARD

By Charlotte Becker

ALONE and dull, I sit and spin
All through the Summer day,
And only pause to gather in
The threads that go astray.

Without the birds are caroling,
The winds blow sweet, I ween,
And Master Love, they say, doth fling
His favors on the green.

Yet I—I dare not lift mine eyes,
Nor wander from the door,
Lest Love should make my heart more wise—
More lonely—than before!



THE PREMATURE PRESS

FIRST REPORTER—I see by the last edition that our old schoolmate, Jones, has committed suicide.

SECOND REPORTER—Hurry down and you may be in time to prevent his doing it.

THE LITTLE GRAY HOUSE

By Mary Glascock

THE little gray house showed just the peep of a soft-breasted gable—gray, weathered shingles—above the tall trees, nesting in filmy greenery against the sky.

In the little gray house lived the little gray lady, dove-eyed with soft wrinkled hands shaded by ruffles of deep, yellowed lace, and wavy spun-glass hair worn low-coiled, tucked neatly in by a wide-banded silver comb, which shimmered as did her hair when she walked in the sunshine of the garden paths.

Bending over white clove pinks, a girl, dark-haired, scarlet-gowned, with long, slanting eyes, whose dusky depths held the glow of unspoken dreams and unstirred feeling, struck a note of color, intense as a tanager's breast, across the stillness of green and white.

The garden was very still in the morning haze, still as a leafy sanctuary in the heart of a forest. Not a fluttering leaf lay overnight on the clean-swept paths; not a stray twig budded over bounds of its garden-bed, nor rose blossomed out of place.

Suddenly Katherine threw back her head and listened.

Shivering the silence, through the cypress mass that hedged the garden from the gaze and boldness of the next-door garden, a mandolin thrummed, a laugh, care-free, drifted, others chimed in merry staccato. From the open door of the next-door house a pianola blared the latest thing in light opera, throwing the noisy music against the walls of the little gray house until the little gray lady

gently closed the windows, pulled together the rose-damask curtains, and called Katherine in.

Sullenness crept from the curve of Katherine's lips to her eyes, puckering her forehead to a protesting frown. Impatiently she wrested the tail of her gown from Tip, the fox-terrier; the flounce gave, and, laughing, she let the jagged tear trail after her down the graveled path. Then she gave a decorous white rose, sentineled near the steps, a slap, and bit her lip while she lingered in front of the door. Tip, paying no attention to her command to follow, burrowed deep under the cypress hedge where a slight thinning of branches made it possible to dig, and wagged his tail with delight as his wriggling body disappeared behind a barricade of pawed earth.

"Lucky beast!" she exclaimed, and frowned again.

There was stitching all morning behind the rose-damask curtain. A certain red gown had to be mended with old-fashioned carefulness, to an accompaniment of low-voiced conversation, which received very stray negations or assertions from the wandering thoughts of a girl, whose heart seethed rebellion at each stitch, and writhed at each maxim born of Aunt Katherine's gentle dogmatism—a girl hungering for cake of romance instead of bread of common sense.

Flitting echoes of the joyous tumult next door would creep in, as did an occasional sunbeam through the rift of the drawn curtains; a hot tear splashed the half-darned flounce. She was very young, and very tired of the

green stillness and isolation. Streets, companionship, other people's gardens would be more amusing than her own inheritance. These should be hers by right; her youth clamored for them. If they were not given, why not take them? The boldness of the thought paled her cheek, quickened her breath. Her mother had ventured—The peace, which was dear to Aunt Katherine, edged every nerve until she could scream from the grating of it.

Emotionless, Aunt Katherine's voice purred over the beauty of stillness, the fineness of repose.

"The Strong's are worth millions, I understand. So much money must be coarsening," she argued convincingly—at least to herself—as she settled her eyeglasses that she might better see the fine hemstitching of a cotta for a choir-boy at old St. John's.

"I like noise and I like money," asserted Katherine vehemently, looking up from the flounce, which in the emphasis of her statement she had puckered. "And I like common things—if you're in them," she concluded doggedly.

"Are you ill, Katherine," the little gray lady solicitously inquired, "or is it—?" The fine lip quivered; she finished the sentence silently. A picture of the past, stored in the attic of memory, thick under the dust of long ago, came clear to her mind as if laid away but yesterday. Nervously she smoothed the sheer lawn of the cotta, and asked in a voice burdened with trouble, "Shall we go away for a little change, Katherine? It's not time for the mountains for two months, but we can go. I suppose I forget"—a stifled sigh—"that you are quite grown and need change; I am prosy company. Age does not come like a stroke, and we old people are prone to forget our years. I must be growing old—I am old—but I hope not selfish." Her voice was wistful in the half inquiry.

"It's as poky in the mountains as here. I'm deathly tired of it all." Katherine threw down her work. "There's a tingling in my veins, something tugging me out of my rut, urging

me to flee from this humdrum life as from Sodom. Sometimes I tramp half the night up and down my room, Aunt Katherine; I don't understand? I have to hold myself to keep from swinging down the big rose-vine by my window and running—I don't know where, nor care, so I'm free in the open. Of course I'm well, brutally well. I want—I want—everything. I like noise, the louder the better. I like it; only I want to be in it, a part of it. I don't wish to do anything that's proper and still. I didn't mean to speak out. Forgive me, Aunt Katherine. Longings rise like yeast in my veins, and today I'm sorry they've spilled over." Impulsively she threw her arms about the bewildered gray lady, who, wide-eyed, sat stonily listening. "It will soon pass, I dare say—it's gone now, like all effervescing things." She laughed, half-ashamed, half-embarrassed, and picked up the sewing. "It's the devil in me—sometimes he gets the mastery." She looked at the little lady with honest eyes. "I'm sorry it troubles you, but—I'm sorrier for myself."

"Hereditry!" The little gray lady shaped the word in her mind, but did not utter it.

"Let's move to the other side of the house. It's easier to run than fight," said Katherine.

"Not the drawing-room in the morning!"

"Why not? Anywhere so that we move, do something different. I'll carry the cotta and your work-basket."

A maid knocked at the door. Miss Joy took a card from the salver.

"Mr. Cary Strong," she read aloud. "The young man from next door," she observed, straightening the ruffles at her wrists. "And in the morning! Did he ask for me?" she inquired of the maid.

"Miss Joy, he said, madam."

Katherine's daring eyes contemplated the closed door. Perhaps—perhaps—not often so exciting a thing happened in the little gray house of a morning, nor midday, nor afternoon, nor night. The young man from next

door! She had seen him once, just a glimpse as she was driving; and he had stared, just a second, a well-bred, deferential stare which she had decided she rather liked, and which Aunt Katherine criticized as presumptuous. What broad shoulders the young man from next door had! And his hair waved, one turn on his forehead, nice, thick, sunny hair. And she liked his walk; she always did like a stride, a good, long, swinging, manly stride. Remarkable how much she had observed about that young man from next door, who was one of the Summer colony overrunning the dull college town lately made fashionable. Her thoughts were racing swift as the runners on the cinder-path when Aunt Katherine returned.

The little lady took her seat with dignity. Her scant five feet could express a deal, when the Joy manners required. Katherine waited. Then, patience not being one of the virtues appropriated by her youth, she snapped the silence.

"What did he—what did Mr. Strong wish, Aunt Katherine?" She held the card between her thumb and forefinger as if prompting herself to the name.

"He brought back your trespassing dog. I must speak to Phipps about planting another tree in the hedge and sinking a board in the weak place." Katherine looked expectant. "My eyesight is a trifle dim for using a hundred cotton in hemstitching," the little lady resumed, taking up the cotta and dismissing the irrelevant subject of the young man.

Katherine's brows knitted in persistency; her mouth straightened.

"What did he say, Aunt Katherine?"

"Who? Oh, the young man? Nothing much. He brought home Tip, who was so disgustingly dirty that I sent him to Phipps for a bath. Mr. Strong asked quite politely, if in bad taste, seeing that I haven't called, if you and I wouldn't come over informally, and have tea with his mother this afternoon. They have guests from town and his mother would be happy if we would waive formality in the

country. We have friends in common, and so forth. I've forgotten the other immaterial reasons for waiving ceremony."

"Oh!" Katherine exclaimed, "and—and——"

"Of course I declined courteously, firmly. I've never called, nor do I intend to do so. Our friend in common was Ida Dent. She knows everybody, you know. Inherits her gregarious taste from her grandmother. That was a misalliance, you remember. Ida Dent would motor with her butcher if his car was the latest make and of required speed."

"We're not going? It was kind of them. I think it was very kind, and—when we haven't called—most considerate. And—I should so much like to go—and to know Mr. Cary Strong"—she again looked at the card, lying in the palm of her hand—"and his mother."

"We're not going." Miss Joy stitched at the cotta with compressed lips.

All the long afternoon, shut in her room, rebellious impulses tempted Katherine. Hot thoughts burned in her mind, smothered to ashes in their own intensity before acted upon. The ache of dim longing hurt. Ideas shaped and unshaped themselves, stray phantoms of resolves that misted into moody questionings; revolt of tempestuous youth against calm age; vain reachings after intangible things, no matter what—anything to relieve the inertia of life lived on a level, where nothing happens. Every fiber of youth recoiled from the dull regularity; every feeling surged in protest against its deadliness. Vainly she tried to square her conception of life with the poverty of its visible results; it was useless outreaching. She only knew that she was young and unhappy.

But even the unhappiness of youth grows tiresome when there is no one to comfort, nor understand, so she tied on her garden hat—a very becoming garden hat, deep cream straw with nodding red poppies matching the flame of her cheeks and glow of her gown—and went into the garden.

The hedge held alluring suggestion. With head turned she sauntered past its soldierly file, and sat down by the very thin place at the roots of a tree.

The arbor next door was across the lawn—she had placed it in driving by, and it was there she decided they would have tea. Made of bamboo, draped in wistaria, it had looked fascinatingly cool, just the place for tea, under green and purple shadow, just the background for becoming gowns—just—She sighed, and sat straight in her musing.

Laughter still sounded on the other side of the hedge, and voices came nearer. A woman laughed, evidently at something amusing. Hastily Katherine pressed her hands to her ears; her face reddened. She could not listen, but she would not move away. Tip had left a small tunnel which, as yet, the gardener had not filled. How lonely it was to be so near paradise, and yet barred from it by a cypress hedge! Busied with regret, she dropped her hands from her ears.

"Miss Joy," someone spoke her name. Virtuously she stiffened, then held her breath for fear that it would not be repeated. "Miss Joy, I can see the flounce of a red gown under the hedge, or is it a red geranium?" the voice quizzed.

"The geraniums are on the other side of the garden," she corrected, and bit her lip for answering at all. "May I ask who is speaking?" she added in her best chaperoned tone. "Is it the gardener?" she inquired sweetly.

"I beg your pardon for speaking," the voice continued. "It is not the gardener; he's a much more proper person. But what's the use of living next door if I can't introduce myself, when I wish to know you? Miss Joy—Mr. Strong. The fox-terrier would have done this for me, judging by his friendly call. He waived ceremony in a most kindly, unhuman manner. Besides, I have called. You've had my card if you didn't receive me."

"I couldn't." The answer rushed unguardedly, and there was a dent in her lower lip.

"Why?"

"Aunt Katherine."

"I'm not dangerous."

"I'm not out, and——"

"Does being in mean a nunnery?"

Silence and a deep sigh.

"Couldn't you come to tea because you're not out, or because——?"

"Because you're common and coarsely rich," interrupted Katherine brutally. A red flush flamed her cheeks and she rose quickly to go.

Silence again for the space of a second. Still she lingered, dismay gathering in her eyes, for she was tender of heart, if a trifle hasty and blunt of tongue.

"And you?" the voice queried, with no hint of offense, laughter mocking in its inflection.

"We? Oh, we're so old, so stupid, so conventional, we're most uncommon and finely poor. How nice it must be to be just common, and enjoy yourself, and do things that you like, and not mind whether you are developing traits of your ancestors! You've so much the best of us."

"It is convenient not to have ancestors you're so deadly familiar with that you have to live up to their virtues, or shy at the reflections of their vices, when you recognize them mirrored in yourself, and see exactly how you're going to turn out. The piquancy of obscurity gives sauce to life; it keeps you venturing and guessing. These conventions! I shed mine with my baby clothes. Life is too short for circumlocution. I wished to know you, and I called and asked you here. My mother wouldn't call first because your aunt, who had lived in this spot longer, wouldn't call, so I took the dilemma by the horns—and was thrown." He laughed outright.

She decided that she liked his laugh—it rang true—and his voice; it was low, assertive, an honest voice one could be scolded by without a sting. Sympathy edged the banter of its tone, or—"Sitting on the off-side of a hedge makes one speculative about one's neighbors," she mused impersonally.

Then she heard a woman's voice in-

quire why he was laughing to himself, and a crisping of silk undermuslin as a girl sat down by him. Indignant, whether with the man's presumption or the girl's preëmption, she did not know, and, with head held high, Katherine moved away to gather clove pinks from the border next the garden hedge.

The alluring, tempting voice called again in a whisper, "Miss Joy."

Slowly she strolled back, not too near, but quite within hearing distance.

"She's gone, thank heaven! But it's common to express a real feeling. I've no doubt that you, being uncommon, would play with the truth gracefully or embroider the fact with disguising stitches of silk, soft covering to hide the stab of the needle. It's rather interesting—um—instructive, the study of the uncommon. That's why we should know each other. I'm working in the city in settlement work, and doing a book on sociology, so you see I don't run across many uncommon specimens."

"I thought that you didn't have to work?"

"I don't work—I amuse myself. It's my vacation, and now I'm working. House-parties are laborious—and motoring, you work your passage."

"I should love to work." She spoke to the clove pinks held in her hand.

A parting of branches under the opening in the hedge, and the edge of a tray appeared; the tray contained an ice and a plate of macaroons.

"Will you break bread with me?" he asked. "The macaroons are uncommonly good. And do you like olive sandwiches?"

"I adore them." Then she hesitated. The friendliness of the voice made it seem churlish to refuse, and she stretched out her hand for a macaroon. "They *are* uncommonly good. Thank you. I've begun by breaking a rule—I might as well——"

"Shatter the last one of them. Wait, I'm going to fetch a plate of sandwiches—I don't care for sweet stuff. I feel like a schoolboy filching

a double share. It's delicious, this being ungrown again!"

"Children can't be expected to behave," Katherine gaily retorted, crunching another macaroon and helping herself to a heap of sandwiches pushed through Tip's tunnel.

"I wish there was no hedge," from the other side.

"So do—then I should not be here." Slowly she brushed the crumbs from her lap and rose to go. "Good-bye, thank you for your hospitality—Mr. Strong, is it? I hope some day we shall meet."

"I shall call tonight. You should ask me. You've eaten my salt. Remember what that binds you to. You'll probably accumulate a stack of my cards in your drawing-room or in the waste-paper basket during my vacation. I generally accomplish what I determine to do."

She remembered the firm set of his chin, his squared shoulders and quite believed what he asserted.

She was at an upper window when she heard the chug of an automobile at the gate. From behind the curtains she watched him walk up the garden path. Hurriedly she ran down the stairs to the drawing-room to hear Phipps say, "The ladies are not receiving tonight," vigilant Aunt Katherine behind the rose-damask curtains.

Through the diamond panes at the side of the door Katherine watched him walk down the garden path, his shoulders heaving with laughter. Once he turned and looked back; his eyes flashed defiance at the little gray house, daring it to keep its windows shuttered and its doors locked against him. The young man's chin *was* determined, she decided.

"He doesn't look a bit common. He hasn't a common face, a common voice. I don't believe——" She entered the drawing-room and faced the little gray lady sitting back in a big tapestry chair, with a bright pink spot burning in the cream vellum of each cheek.

"I dismissed him. He's a very for-

ward young man. He actually asked for you. His people are impossible—so new. They're in oil or something that smells—varnish," she exclaimed in defensive answer to Katherine's clear-searching eyes.

The lessening chug of the automobile drifted in at the open window.

"I don't see that that's any reason why we shouldn't be decent to our neighbors."

"Katherine, Katherine, remember all that—you have to guard against. My dear, remember."

"I do remember, Aunt Katherine—my father's sins, my mother's elopement, and my grandfather's and great-grandfather's wild blood. I've been brought up on these memories. You've kept the sins of six generations tabulated for me, and I can't well forget my inheritance. I've written them down, bordered them with a fascinating wreath of little red devils, and pinned them next to the laundry-list on my closet door. They're all that keep me alive. And every day I feel that inheritance stirring my blood. I can't tell what I may do next. I'm sick of the French lectures at the Summer school. I'm sick of this narrow little college town with its prunes and prisms. I'm tired of everything. I spoke to that young man today. I ate his ice and macaroons and sandwiches—and I liked him."

"Spoke to him! Ate his ice and macaroons and sandwiches? Oh, Katherine. Where? How? You've never met." The little gray lady was all of a shocked flurry.

"Behind the hedge."

"The hedge! How could you, Katherine? You've never been introduced."

"Oh, yes, he introduced himself in a most satisfactory manner."

"Professor Cutts," Phipps announced at the door.

The professor, small, lean and smiling, came in at the usual hour.

Katherine had forgotten that it was Tuesday night, and that the lacquered table, with the cards for *bézique*, was drawn under the light. Settling down with a rueful frown, she picked up a

piece of embroidery, while the professor dealt the cards, and between plays enlarged upon his theory of heredity versus environment. The professor was preparing a brochure on the subject, and had respect for Miss Joy's attentive appreciation, an appreciation which so surely and flatteringly grasped his conclusions that he called her his inspiration, and spent many evenings in her comfortable drawing-room over *bézique* and cups of strong tea.

Katherine recognized her own case disguised as a theory tentatively put forward by Aunt Katherine, which the professor condemned as impossible. For to him no environment could loosen so fearful a grip as heredity. How puerile it all was to the girl! She could throw the embroidery frame at the professor's head as he droned to Aunt Katherine, who had inherited her reprieve through the blood of a great-great-grandmother, a Quakeress, married to the greatest dare-devil of all the Joys. The most profligate gamester, wildest drinker, bravest soldier and most gallant of all the men of the line had carried off the lady in gray from old Philadelphia, and her virtues shone anew in placid Aunt Katherine, who sat deferentially drinking in the professor's wisdom. How glad the girl was when the clock struck ten, the professor's unvarying time for leaving, and she was released from the thralldom of didactic and baseless assertion! How glad she was that her blood was not of the even flow of the Quakeress ancestress.

In obedience to Aunt Katherine, and because there was nothing else to do—Phipps having securely repaired the breach in the hedge—she went to Professor Ferrier's French lectures.

Mr. Cary Strong, finding that his knowledge of Gallic literature was a bit hazy, forsook the gay house-parties and spent two or three afternoons a week in the lecture-room. The lectures were not as distinguished as the professor, who was of the Academy, but the back bench commanded a view

of Katherine's profile as she took notes. The dimple in her chin was distracting. Little wavy wisps of hair had a fascinating way of blowing about her temples. He liked the impatient toss of the hand with which she smoothed them down; he liked the shimmering light of her gray-green eyes—dark jade he called them, with the sparkle of sapphire. He liked the fearless look when she lifted them, and directly asked a question of the professor. Cary Strong learned a deal in these notable lectures, but mostly facts about Katherine. He could say many pretty things in French, and he did, when sometimes she condescended not to ignore his existence, and strolled with the commoner across the campus homeward, separating as they neared the hedge. No doubt the little god chuckled to himself in his leafy retreat—vantage for his marksmanship—when two people, who had eaten salt together, found so much to discuss in French verbs.

Strong had come to hate the hedge: it was the tangible expression of the intangible barrier that separated their lives. He still called occasionally for form's sake, and because he had said that he would; and he meant to tell Aunt Katherine of the French lectures if she but gave him the chance, for he did not easily stoop to deception. Aunt Katherine, obstinately, was never at home to him, for little gray ladies, placid and gentle, can be very obdurate when they choose, and very set in their soft gray ways.

The June air was rich as wine. June roses pressed soft-petaled cheeks against the rough brick of the college buildings, about which tangled vines, and blossoms twined loving arms. To the tips of the towers ivy ran and clung, draping harsh outline in blur of leaf. The campus was rimmed with blaze of geraniums, trumpeting Summer. Down the cañones of the foothills, where belated eschscholtzias reluctantly clung in waning gold, June winds blew, bubbling the blood, wooing wander-longings to the surface. It was too fair a day for lectures about French poets

moldered to dust, their verses half forgotten.

And so, somehow, Cary Strong forgot the conventions he had laughed at and derided, but ever kept rigidly, and tempted Katherine with a wandering in his car, over the hills in the sweet languor of the Summer haze. And she went.

He drove the machine, and the motion was smooth and not over-fast, just a gentle gliding. In pure joy of the day, Katherine tossed off her hat when they left town, and let the sun beat on her head and shine in her eyes.

"This is living!" she exclaimed.

Strong's eyes were on her face as, leaning back against the cushions, hands gloveless, clasped behind her head, she gazed meditating into the sky.

"Don't talk, I couldn't bear it." She checked him. "This is a day you're thankful to be alive, to be a part of—and to thank God that He made you," she added low to herself, a thrill in her voice. "It's the first time that I've been perfectly happy in my whole life."

Strong looked from the dimple dented in her chin into the gray-green eyes. He had slowed his pace.

"Your eyes make me think of jade." He fumbled in his pocket. "Look at this." He held a piece of rare stone engraved with a queer character. She took it in her hand. "I bought it from an old Chinese I found sitting among the ruins of his shop in San Francisco. He'd been grubbing in the rubbish and had found this in an iron box. It was all that was left of his fortune, and, very unwillingly, he let me have it. Orientals are uncommunicative, but from what I could dig from him I judged it an amulet. The old man was the picture of misfortune sitting on heaps of burnt brick; nothing about him but one stark chimney against the sky-line. He was going to China to die, he told me, and let me have this for the price of his passage."

"It's the most exquisite piece I have ever seen. It should be set with tiny gold dragons holding it up, and——"

Strong's hand had left the steering-wheel; the machine stopped. "It shall be set with gold dragons. I got this for my wife," he said quietly.

Color deepened in Katherine's cheeks and a mist drifted before her eyes, clouding the perfect day. She gave the jade quickly back into his hand. "Let's go home," she said. "I shouldn't have come. It hasn't been right. It's deceitful to Aunt Katherine. Why did you let me? It's just what the women of my blood would have done! Aunt Katherine will be so hurt, so disappointed."

She covered her face in her hands as he turned the machine.

"Will you keep the jade, Katherine?" he asked.

With both hands tightly grasping the sides of the machine, she looked straight up at him, fluffy wisps of hair blowing across her eyes.

"Then you are not going to give it to—her?"

"Yes, if you will honor me by keeping it; it is for her. Will you have it, Katherine?"

"But—but—your wife——"

"Is to be as you decide, Katherine."

Aunt Katherine had sent the maid up the hill to the college hall to remind Katherine that she was to ask Professor Ferrier and his wife to come early the following night. They had already replied to her formal invitation to dine, but she wished them to come before dusk, to see her roses then in their June prime. The maid went, came back, and reported that Miss Katherine had not been present at the lecture.

The little gray lady never said a word, but sank back in her chair to think it out. While she had feared for Katherine, she had trusted her, and that trust had never before been betrayed. The child had come at last into her inheritance. The professor was right. Blood had triumphed over environment, and in a moment ruthlessly crushed what she had carefully builded for years. In spite of her earnest work, in spite of the influence of the little gray house, Katherine had

become enmeshed in those ancient webs, spun by dead hands, whose threads reached down from centuries past—those webs, slight as gossamer, yet strong as steel, transmitting the vibrations of sleeping traits from generation to generation. What she had feared in her inmost heart yet ever fought against came as an overwhelming shock. The little gray lady grew strangely quiet as she pondered over it. Katherine was the helpless victim of the first spinning. And her heart grew tender with pity for the girl. There was no reproach, only dulness of disappointed hope.

She waited until dusk crept through the interlaced trees into the low French windows and misted the familiar things from her sight. The spicy incense of clove pinks stole into the old-fashioned room, and clouded the altar upon which she had laid her broken faith with prayer that it might be well with the child. Only love, blessed by forgiveness, waited to enfold the girl, while fragile and white as a lily of yesterday Aunt Katherine sat, almost lost in the depths of the big armchair.

Suddenly downstairs a door flung open—a rush through the hallway. The patient hands grasped the arm of the chair with unsteady clasp, and Katherine entered, a radiant thing from out the dusk.

"Aunt Katherine, Aunt Katherine!" She threw herself on her knees and buried her face in the little old lady's lap. Then the story was told in the folds of the soft, gray gown, while withered hands smoothed the fluff of fine, dark hair. Katherine looked up, a strange light in her eager face, a strange peace of dreams come true, of knowledge learned, in the restless eyes. "I'm not sorry that I went, Aunt Katherine. Don't ask me to repent. I couldn't help going, and I wouldn't if I could. Oh, Aunt Katherine—Aunt Katherine—" She kissed the little gray lady. "I'm glad that I've told you. I didn't mean to at first. It's the little gray house—what it has taught me—made me tell you. I may go again." Her eyes were level with

the little gray lady's. "But I shall never deceive you, Aunt Katherine."

"Miss Joy." The voice startled the quiet between them. Ushered in by Phipps, Strong stood in the doorway. A rare smile glowed in Katherine's eyes; she did not rise from her knees. "Miss Joy." The room, with its spicy odor of pinks, its quaint mahogany highboy, tables and setting of long ago, and the women—the dawn and evening of life—clinging together, strangled the words he would speak.

Aunt Katherine slipped her arm about the girl, who leaned closer to her and looked at Strong. He moved quietly, and stood near them.

"Miss Joy, I've come to confess a great deal to you. You've never given me a chance before." His smile was almost boyish, winning, as he spoke. "Now, I've come to ask you to give me Katherine."

Katherine rose and went to him. It seemed to the little gray lady as if the world were hushed. Even the velvet-winged great white moth, flown in from the dark, stilled its fluttering. The very air was thick with expectancy.

"Professor Cutts," Phipps announced outside the portière. Miss Joy had forgotten it was Tuesday night. The professor hurried upon Phipps's heels, and, book in hand, in his near-sighted way, stumbled into the room.

"I have the highest, most conclusive authority to read you tonight, Miss Joy, upon our favorite subject. It is a learned, comprehensive, conclusive digest of the matter. Now, heredity——"

"Professor Cutts—Mr. Cary Strong," Miss Joy introduced.

"Cary Strong! The grandson of my college-mate—Cary Strong, the philanthropist? An ancestry, sir, and ancestry to be proud of." The professor turned from Miss Joy to shake the young man by the hand again vigorously. Vacancy greeted his continued salutation; and Miss Joy smiled faintly as the portière, swished by the trail of a gown, was pushed aside.

With wandering thought, she settled herself to listen to the professor's dry authority. The dissection of its ethics was nothing to her but surgeon's work. The writer did not count upon the influence of a little gray house and a little gray lady. No such healing was admitted by the wise soul-doctor, but—She brushed the blur from her eyeglasses with a fine handkerchief; and pink color mounted to her cheeks as the low murmur of voices from the window-seat in the other room confused the meaning of the book. Theories were futile things droned in the dry little professor's monotone; only thoughts of youth—long thoughts—cleared in her mind.

After tea at nine, and many protested cups, the protest being mere matter of habit, the professor took his leave, half-hurt, half-offended, as he jerked himself into his greatcoat, at her slowness of appreciation.

Seated alone, Aunt Katherine's head verily drooped, and a tear crept down to the fine, withered hands crossed in her lap. "Bless the little gray house," softly she said to herself, stifling a sigh. Then she looked up and smiled as, through the rose-damask curtains, hand in hand Katherine and Cary Strong came to her.



THE HAPPY FAMILY

MRS. SCRAPPINGTON (*in the midst of her reading*)—Here is an item which says that full-grown rhinoceroses cost \$12,000 apiece.

MR. SCRAPPINGTON (*meanly*)—Eh-yah! And isn't it a pity that women can't wear them on their hats?

THE FLOWER AND THE GEM

By R. K. Weekes

THIS, my dear Frank, is not a letter, but an explanation; so don't read it aloud at the breakfast-table for Emma's edification. I am about to tell you a fine, mysterious tale, and to lay before you a nice question of honor.

The tale relates to my marriage, which took place six weeks ago. I've never got on with women—don't shine in drawing-rooms; prefer a library. But I've always intended to settle down in due time and make a home. I don't believe in marriage for love, and I still less believe in marriage for money; but I do believe in marriage by selection.

Do you happen to remember the Wylies? Dear, good, meritorious bores; but they had an only daughter, Pearl—a pearl before swine—who exactly fitted my ideas of what a wife should be; not too young, and yet not old enough to have acquired any aggressive tastes of her own; pretty, after a delicate and yet enduring fashion; amiable, for she never lost her temper with her mother, a most tiresome old person; docile, thoughtful, intelligent, and—don't scoff—a good housewife: in fact, a piece of perfection.

I wasn't at all in love, but I liked her thoroughly. I courted her; she took it with sedate dignity. I asked her to be my wife: she said her "Yes" as simply as possible—no ecstasies. Throughout our engagement she was true to herself, ready to be kissed if I desired it, but withdrawing a little, checking me, if I grew too ardent. All this was exactly what I liked. I hate extravagance of any description, but I'm not without curiosity, and I thought I

should like to see what underlay this maiden coolness.

One evening her father and mother had withdrawn and left us in the library, Pearl's favorite haunt. The library was warm and dark and very quiet; you know how dull and still books make a room, and they had a Turkey carpet and heavy curtains besides. I was very happy, playing about with the poker among the logs in the jolly firelight, and Pearl was sitting by me.

Did I mention that she was pretty? A delicate little thing, very fair and white, like eggshell china; she had blue eyes, and that pale gold hair one sometimes sees on babies. She was fond of wearing white things, in which she used to look rather angelic. We'd been talking about you and Emma, exchanging views on the subject of marriage.

"Pearl," said I, "do you love me in that way?"

"I like you very much," she said. "You know I do, James." If you could have heard the way she said it—the distant, quiet, taken-for-granted, friendly peace!

"You're glad we are to be married?"

"I am content."

"Yes, but how would you feel if the marriage were broken off? Would you be equally content to go back to your classes, and your district, and your old life at home?"

"I should be sorry," she averred; and then drawing back, in a sort of vague discomfort, "I should always be content at home—of course I should."

"How much difference in your life would my absence make?"

"It would make a difference."

"Oh, you do admit that? I'm to be your husband next week. You'd miss me a little if I died?"

"You know I should. You . . . James, what do you want to make me say?"

"That you love me," I said.

"You know I love you."

"So you say. I haven't seen it."

"I do love you," she muttered, turning her face away.

I said, "Kiss me, then."

She didn't respond.

"Why won't you?" I asked.

Then came the answer, which I could barely hear:

"I am—afraid of it——"

"Learn not to be," I whispered.

She was quite still for an instant; then she gave me her lips. I had the whole truth out of her. I did know, then, that she loved me. I knew also that I had no business *dans cette galère*.

I felt it acutely; however, the mischief was done now—it was done when I first touched her heart. I asked her, "How long since, Pearl?"

"I liked you when I first saw you."

Little piece of reticence she was! "Like," it must be, not love, though I knew, and she knew that I knew exactly what she meant by that very inadequate word. After that I let her off, and we settled down upon our usual calm relation. Still, she was not quite at her ease; she seemed to have something on her mind.

We were in the middle of a discussion about the drawing-room paper when she suddenly interrupted herself and returned to the subject. It was rather queer, the way she did it, with one finger still in the book of patterns.

"Yes, I certainly like this white paper, it's so much quieter. James, I have something to tell you."

"Tell away, then," said I. "Get it over and don't worry about it! I sha'n't eat you, whatever you've done."

"I haven't done anything," she said, knitting her brows a little, "and there's nothing to tell; and yet I feel as though you ought to know it. Did

you ever see me look as though I—as though I seemed to lose myself?"

"I've seen you look as though you were speaking to the young-eyed cherubim."

"Yes, and that's how I feel."

"Conversing with the angels! what next? Don't fly to heaven and leave me behind!"

"Not the angels," she said; "no, not the angels, James; nor yet the bad spirits. But—some spirit. I don't know what it is, and I never hear what it says. But I feel as though it were trying to make me understand—often and often. I'm not mad; I don't hear voices—I only feel it in my mind. I've been told that I should make a good medium. Once a spiritualist wanted to use me; but I wouldn't do it, and I never will. I hate that sort of thing. There! now I've told you. I don't understand it. Do you mind?"

"Mind? My dear child, what do you take me for? It's not a sin, is it?"

"No, not a sin; but it's something unusual, and I know you hate what's unusual. You like things to be just so, always decorous, always in order. If you knew you were going to die of heart failure at a certain hour of the day, I do believe you would still get up, shave, have breakfast, begin work, and so go on steadily just as usual, till death surprised you in a moment!"

"Well, you know you'd do the same, Pearl," I said.

"Perhaps I should."

"Only there is a good deal under your quietness, my child."

"There is a *great* deal under yours, James."

"I don't think so."

"You don't know yourself."

Well, in due course we had our very magnificent full-length wedding. We were to stay in town for a few days, and then go on to Tirol. The child had never been abroad, and I was keen on showing her the mountains. Switzerland is hopelessly overrun, but you can find unspoilt places in Austria. I must say I was looking forward to the whole thing. To my thinking, that queer confession of hers was the one

thing needed to make her completely charming.

I think anyone might have shared our compartment in the train without discovering our position. We each had newspapers. She leaned back in her corner, I in mine opposite, and we took turns at watching each other. If I leaned out of the window, I felt her eyes on me; and when she looked out of the window she could feel my eyes on her. I knew it, because I could make her color mount. I'm afraid I used my power unmercifully; for all of a sudden she broke out, "Oh, don't!" and buried her face in her hands. I changed my place and sat beside her.

I did notice, as I moved, that the train was rocking violently, but I can't say I gave it a thought; I tried to draw away her hands . . . and then it happened.

Heavens! how things can hurt! Did you ever suffer genuine pain, Frank? I never did before. It came on me blindingly, with a crash and a shock, and for the first instant I was literally in hell. I forgot Pearl and everything else; and then mercifully I fainted—I'd willingly have died to get away from the pain!

I came to myself, I'm glad to say, before the rescue party arrived to dig us out. The first thing I saw was the jagged end of the track and a trail of netting, sticking up against the sky above my head in a most unnatural position; there were clouds of flame-illuminated steam, and filthy black smoke, men screaming, the noise of escaping steam, woodwork smashing, voices calling to invisible mates, "Bill! Bill! Lend us a hand here, will you?" with a running private accompaniment of the most possessing discomfort.

I was hitched up between the seats in a diabolically awkward manner, and it hurt diabolically to get free; but I couldn't stand being messed about, so I did it, thereby wrenching my arm afresh.

All this while I had forgotten every syllable about Pearl—the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately

selfish, when you get it unadulterated, scraped bare of the conventions of duty. However, as soon as I got up I saw her; after which I remembered about her. The child had fainted, but she wasn't hurt. I tried to get her out, but you've no notion how awkward a broken arm makes you! It has such an independent way with it—seems to swing round and look you in the face. I couldn't stand it; so I sat on the rim of the seat till the gang turned up, and they had her out in a trice.

I wanted to see after her myself, but I had to wait and have my arm set, and then off I started to look for Pearl. Vanished! I hunted high and low, but nowhere could I find her.

At last a porter told me that a young lady giving the name of Wylie (Wylie, mark you, not Meredith) had gone off in a farm-cart to Swanborough to catch the down express to Mereworth—whence we had started a couple of hours before! I chartered another farm-cart, and started in pursuit.

Imagine the journey, over plowed fields most of the way, in a springless cart, with a broken arm! However, I got there at last, feeling pretty sick; and I found my lady in the third-class waiting-room, very composed, excessively untidy, and talking, with every mark of interest, to an ugly, uncouth young workman with his arm in a sling! Pearl, who would walk a mile rather than speak to a stranger!

I hadn't the least idea what the prudent course would be, so I walked up to her without preface and said: "My dear child, what on earth possessed you to come here? I've been hunting for you all over the place!"

She ceased talking to her navvy and raised her eyes with an air of blank amazement.

"Why didn't you wait at Bradbrooke? We might have gone on in an hour, and been in town for dinner."

"Town?" said she. "I live at Mereworth!"

"Pearl, don't you know me?"

"I never to my knowledge saw you before!" said my wife.

"Who do you think you are?"

"My name is Wylie—Rhoda Margaret Wylie. I think you must be taking me for somebody else."

"My child," I said, "you married me this morning!"

"I didn't!" she cried, turning scarlet.

"You did. Look at your ring. Look at your traveling dress."

She surveyed herself with a puzzled air, and looked up again at me.

"What else were you doing at Bradbrooke? All your boxes are in the train, marked with your initials—R. M. M. Look at your handkerchief; it has Meredith on it, not Wylie. Look at me. Don't you remember my face? For heaven's sake control yourself—don't make a scene!"

"I do seem to remember *that*," she said. "What do you call yourself?"

"James Meredith."

"Oh! Mr. Meredith, of The Terraces?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, I do remember you a little. But I don't remember marrying you, and I don't remember wanting to marry you!" she declared, with unmistakable vivacity and purpose. "No, not in the least—very far from it!"

To all this our friend the navvy was listening open-mouthed.

"My dear child, need you take the world into your confidence?" I said in exasperation, moving forward to speak lower. The result was tragic; for I struck my arm against her traveling bag (marked with a big R. M. M., if she had only taken the trouble to look), and promptly fainted away for the second time. I don't know what happened next. I heard afterward that Pearl, disclaiming all responsibility, would have gone off home and left me behind; but just as she was telling the doctor about my strange hallucination, who should come up but an old friend of the Wylies who had actually been present at the wedding! And she wouldn't believe him at first; but the combined testimony of him, the guard of the train (who had seen us get in besprinkled with rice) and her own wedding garments overwhelmed her. A wire home removed

her last doubts; so that when I came to myself I found a Mrs. Meredith beside me, calm and fairly kind.

I was so bemuddled by pain and faintness that I half forgot her delusion—thought it was a delusion of my own. She wanted to stay at Swanborough, but I was set on getting to a place where I could be ill at my leisure; so we got into the London train.

I haven't the slightest recollection of what happened for the first hour or so; but at last I seemed to come out of a maze and see Pearl tugging at the window-strap.

Next I asked her if she were tired, and, as it happened, I used her name again. She did not look pleased at that, either. "Why, Pearl, what's the matter?" I asked, all unconscious of my offense; and then out came the truth.

"I wish you would not call me Pearl at every other word! I dislike it so!"

"What else am I to call you?"

"Oh, call me Margaret, or Rhoda, if you wish—Rhoda for choice. I am *not* Pearl."

"So you have always been known."

"So I don't know myself, then."

Arrived at this point, I woke up altogether, and remembered our previous interview. In face of her sitting there, I couldn't think she still cherished the delusion that she hadn't married me; but I saw that something was wrong. "What's the matter?" I asked. "You're not a bit like yourself."

"That's it. I am not myself."

"Are you going to tell me again that you never married me?"

"No. I know I married you. At least, Pearl did; I didn't."

"Now what do you mean by that?"

"Are you feeling well enough to talk about it?" she asked distrustfully.

"Yes, quite well enough. What do you mean? Let's have the whole truth."

"Oh, I don't care. I'm sure I'm glad to have an explanation; I was only thinking of you!" she said disdainfully. "Look at me. Am I Pearl?"

I did look. She was changed. There was the same mask of features, but every line in them meant some-

thing strange. I told you, didn't I, that Pearl was like a domesticated angel? This child was more like an elf out of the woods—"a deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck." She had bent her hat into a new shape, and twisted it sideways; she had put on her dress differently; there was a winning wave in her petticoat; she sat with her ankles crossed, displaying something higher than her very pretty instep; her hair was fluffed out into loose curls, and she hadn't any gloves on.

"Oh!" she cried, throwing up her hands, "oh, how dull it is and how droll it is! What in the world did Pearl take you for, I wonder? I wouldn't. I don't want to be married to you—I *won't* be married to you! I've been thinking over it all this while, and I suppose, as there's really no doubt she did go through the ceremony, I must stay and travel with you for a time, to save your vanity. But, mind, I'm going to be independent. I won't have you interfering with anything I do. If you try to, I shall simply run away! I shall run away in the end, of course, in any case. I mean, I shall leave you. I can't and won't spend the rest of my life tied to your respectable family coach. You'll have to give out that it's incompatibility of temper."

"You're mad!" I said.

"I'm not, not a bit, and you know it. I'm changed, I suppose—or else I was mad before and married you in my aberration. At any rate, it wasn't I who did it, but Pearl, and I'm not Pearl. I don't understand how it's happened, but it *has* happened."

"You've no right to behave like this; you're treating me most unfairly."

"Oh, bother fairness!"

We sat and regarded each other, till, with a shrug, she turned away to look out of the window. She had forgotten all about me in a moment. A group of children skipping drew her eyes after them, and made her break into sparkling laughter.

"Look here, Pearl, we must settle this."

"Well, don't call me Pearl, then, and don't scowl so; it hasn't any effect."

"I want to know a few things. Do you remember your past life?"

"Yes," still gazing after the children.

"Do you remember your father and mother?"

"Of course I do."

"And me?"

"I remember you—am I to speak candidly?"

"Yes, if you please."

"Well, then, I remember you as a most intolerable bore! I'm sorry, but it's so!"

I did not lose my temper. "Do you remember promising to marry me?"

"Not in the least."

"Do you remember—think now—do you remember telling me how you sometimes fancied spirits spoke to you?"

She colored warmly and drew back. "No, I don't. I'm sure I never did. I'm sure I never should have told you about that. Besides, it's not true."

"I've lent it to a neighbor, and it's got holes in it, and besides I never had one!" I suggested ironically.

"I don't wish to talk about it."

"My dear child, you must. Whether you're Pearl Meredith or no, it's Pearl Meredith's hand that is lying on your knee with my ring upon it. You've made away with my wife somehow, and you can't wonder that I want an explanation."

"If you come to that, I should like to know what right you had to marry Pearl at all, when you know you didn't care two straws about her?"

"I did."

"You didn't, you didn't, or you'd be something else instead of angry now. Besides I know you didn't."

"You know I didn't? How?"

She became quite confused. "Why, I do know it. I've always known it."

"Then you remember what I said in the past?"

"No, I don't. I told you so."

"Then how——?"

"Oh, bother! I won't be bothered!" She flamed up mutinously all of a sudden. "If you bother me I shall get out and leave you at the next station, and then everybody will laugh at you, and you know you won't like that!"

"You shall not leave me!"

"Oh, if you attempt to keep me by force I shall scream at the top of my voice! Will you like that any better?"

"You owe me a great deal, Pearl," I said bitterly, "a great deal; and when I ask for an explanation you will scarcely condescend to listen. You're treating me as badly as you can. You think of no one but yourself."

"I don't much," she responded carelessly. Then she changed her tone a little. "What do you want me to do? I can't be your wife. I don't want to. And besides, you don't want me to. I'm sure I'm the very last girl you would have selected to occupy that responsible position." Here a pause, which I didn't break, so she took up her tale and went on, growing more amenable with every sentence. "I'm sure I'm doing the best I can for you. I've said I'll stay with you, and I will, if you'll behave like a gentleman and try not to be too dull. I'll stay as long as I can possibly endure it. You know you really only care about what people will say. You won't miss Pearl, and you don't want me."

"Confound you, will you be quiet?" I cried.

I didn't mean to say it, you understand, but I couldn't tolerate her condescending tone. She looked first horrified, then amused.

We sat in silence. I suppose I looked rather ill, for she kept stealing uneasy glances. At last she leaned forward, and said in honey-sweet tones, "Does its poor head ache?"

"Yes, it does," I answered sulkily.

"Poor boy with a headache!" she cooed. "I'll come and sit that side, and you shall lie down on the cushions and put your head on my knee, and smell my smelling-salts. *Don't be cross!*"

I could not help laughing at her, in spite of my irritation; for I was also rather incapable. It ended in my doing as she said. (Of course I shouldn't have given in if I had been feeling myself.) It was certainly a relief to lie flat; and the unsympathetic butterfly laid her finger-tips on my

forehead, and drew them across and across it.

"Go away, little crocodile!" she chanted under her breath. "Poor, cross baby! Poor, cross baby! It doesn't like not getting its own way, does it? Never mind, it's good for it—oh, so good! Some day it will thank mama for all her kindness——"

"Pearl, you ridiculous child!" I said, laughing against my will.

"Rhoda, if you please, not Pearl. Rhoda—which means a rose. Roses have thorns, you know; pearls haven't. That's the difference. Now mama is going to sing baby to bye-bye; mama will always be kind if baby's good——"

That was the beginning of our honeymoon. I'll bring you now as fast as I can to the end of it.

We went to Paris; we went to Tirol; and in public we were on affectionate terms. In private we wrangled. Can you wonder? We hadn't a taste in common. She said she hated books, loathed pictures, and loved dancing. I don't dance; I don't like *pensions* where they dance. I prefer a good hotel; but we stayed at noisy *pensions* all the time. When Rhoda wanted her way she wasn't particular what she did to get it. You couldn't turn her; and if you thwarted her, she would hate you most heartily for a time, and make things uncommonly hot.

Now I wasn't in the position to risk an exposure; consequently she had the whip hand, and I had always to give in. You may imagine how I liked that—or rather you mayn't. You never knew Rhoda, and you'll never realize the charm she blended with her wilfulness. I never saw such a little piece of quicksilver! She'd dance half the night, get up at three to see the sunrise up a mountain, come down to organize theatricals, and finish the day by a tempestuous quarrel with me. And I never met such keenness of enjoyment. Sitting beside her on a diligence, I've felt her literally pulsing with delight—a piece of incarnate joy. Wherever we went, she was always the centre. She wasn't

by any means considerate; she annexed her way with others just as she did with me; but she carried people away and along with her, till they forgot to be censorious and were wholly charmed.

Our disagreements came to a head at Mühlhausen. There was a boy staying at our *pension*—well, he was over twenty; but in point of fact his age was about sixteen. I didn't concern myself as a rule with Rhoda's friendships; these violent delights have violent ends. But we were at Mühlhausen for some weeks, and they were calling each other Tom and Rhoda, and were out together half the day, sometimes in company with his sister, but as often as not by themselves. I couldn't climb mountains with that indefatigable child; it affords me no pleasure to get indigestion. Of course people noticed it. I didn't care a button so long as it was only the women; but when the talk in the smoking-room fell silent on my appearance I thought the time had come for me to put in a word. Of course I didn't want her to see what I was after, so I began warily.

"Rhoda, my child, if I were you I wouldn't make any more ascents with Armstrong."

"Yes, I know that. I know it very well; you're far too short in the wind," said she, smiling among her cushions, and then yawning without shame.

"He's a poor mountaineer, and you get the credit for his mistakes."

"No, do I? Do they say it's I who lead and he who follows? What fun! What a lark, I mean!" She was always decorating her speeches with scraps of slang, because I didn't like them.

"The men in the smoking-room today were scoffing at lady climbers. I rather fancy Armstrong had been trying to save his credit at your expense."

"Sure he hadn't," she retorted. "Sure he wouldn't! He knows better. He knows I'd never speak to him again if he did. Are you making this up?"

"No, I'm repeating what I heard."

"You repeated it with an object. You couldn't have believed it."

"On the contrary, I thought it quite probable that you did interfere and put him wrong—you always interfere, and you are not often right—and if he said so, I don't blame him."

"You're rude," she said slowly. "You're jealous, too. You're rude because you're jealous. And I don't care a pin!"

"I'm not jealous, but I'm sorry to see you making a fool of yourself."

"Be sorry, then," said she.

"Why will you never do what I want?"

"Because you never want me to do what I like. Perhaps you'd rather have Pearl back—Pearl, who was all that is perfect, and never transgressed your wishes!"

"I should!" said I, with fervor; whereupon she threw her Tauchnitz book at me and ran away.

The immediate result was that she was more with Armstrong than ever. I didn't like it at all. You mustn't suppose I was jealous. Jealousy was quite beside the point—they were just a pair of children. That was the pity of it; if they had been older, they would have had more sense. For example, they went for a walk one afternoon, he and she and Mary, his sister, and I suppose they did some scrambling, for Rhoda's hair came down. (It did that on small provocation.) She had her arms full of flowers, which she didn't want to drop; so what must the child do but stop and say, "Oh, Tom, I wish you'd twist up my hair for me!" which Tom accordingly did, with the utmost simplicity. This on the road which wound up the hill to the *pension*, and, as luck had it, in full view of most of the inmates—myself included—who had come down to see the sunset from the terrace which overhung the road! To make things worse, Mary had dropped behind, and the pair appeared to be in happy solitude. I leaned over and dropped a pebble upon them, calling out, "If I were you, Rhoda, I should invest in a wig!"

Simple enough, wasn't it? And I thought Rhoda would have understood; but she didn't. She turned

quite white, and I perceived that I had "put her fur up"—one of Tom's sweet expressions—like quills upon the fretful porcupine. She couldn't say anything then, for we were conducting that interview, as I've said, in the presence of half the *pensionnaires*; but I knew I was in for it.

It came that evening on the terrace, whither she had dragged me to "see the moon." We did see the moon, and the silver shield of the lake, and the great blue-purple shapes of the mountains rising up out of the water, and the firefly-handful of lights in the darkness below, some steady, some trembling on the inky ripples along the shore.

"I want to know why you dared to drop that stone," she demanded.

"My dear, I did it to convince those present that I didn't yearn to shoot the pair of you."

"I don't believe it. You did it because you thought our behavior wasn't nice!"

Rhoda had a fine command of scorn. I laughed.

"Well, it wasn't—not in its results, at least. Tom's no coiffeur. My dear child, in the interests of peace, may I advise you to keep your hair up?"

"You're jealous!" she said passionately. "You're a dog in the manger, and a prude, and a brute, and I hate you!" Pleasant for me, wasn't it? "Why were you down there spying, with all those people? I believe you came on purpose!"

"I was down there spying on the sunset; and you flatter me if you think I timed the descent of your hairpins so accurately—I thought it would have happened long before!"

"I shall not stay with you, to be made ridiculous. I will live by myself and have what friends I like. I won't be suspected and spied upon. It's bad enough to be tied to you at all. . . ."

On she ran. I didn't answer, and I didn't listen much—the wisest plan when she was in this denunciatory mood. Soon she came to the end of her indignation—as I knew she would—and became plaintive. "You do nothing but worry me, first for one thing, then

for another. It is so unreasonable of you! Why can't you let me amuse myself in my own way?"

"My dear child, your own way would embroil you with everybody. It wouldn't amuse you long."

"That's the very point, for I probably sha'n't want it to."

"Probably sha'n't want it to! What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing. I don't know."

"Child, you must have said it with some meaning!"

"I didn't. I've forgotten it. Oh, don't worry me, Jim!"

"Be good, sweet maid," I said, smiling at her. "Don't be cross, Rhoda!"

"I am cross—very; and I'm not good. I'm always habitually bad. It is bad to like another man better than one's husband, isn't it?"

"Do you like Tom better than me?"

"Yes. It's a pity, isn't it?"

Well, she'd cured me of my nascent temper. A knife-thrust does make one forget a gnat-bite.

"Now, baby, be reasonable," I said as soon as I could. "Look at things sensibly. Here are we two, indubitably married, in spite of your unfortunate preference for Tom Armstrong; and what's to happen if we go on quarreling? You can't live alone——"

"I can, and shall."

"No, my child, you can't; your mother won't let you, and though you don't obey me, I fancy you will her. Now, I don't like our present arrangement, and I can't put up with it indefinitely. So you have the two courses before you: to live at home with your parents, which you won't enjoy, if I know you at all, or to live with me as my wife. Will you do that?"

"Should you like it?" she asked, with a sidelong look.

"Very well."

"I don't think I should make you a good wife."

"I would put up with you."

"Would you be kind to me? Kind and considerate, as you were with Pearl?"

"I would do my best."

"Not ask too much? Not be—impetuous?"

"Do you think it likely?"

"I didn't know whether you were quite thoroughly tame all through," she said in her soft, childlike voice, which made me for the moment most heartily ashamed of the part I was acting. But I meant to keep it up, and I think I could have done it if she'd yielded then—I think so. Scarcely able to believe in my own good luck I tried to take her hand, when round she wheeled in a flash of indignant wrath, and fire, and fierce independence, as though I'd presumed to touch the wings of Ariel!

"Why, did you think I meant it? Why, I'll never do it—never! What did I see in you? Who could see anything? Oh, how loathsome marriage is, and how loathsomely you say these things to me—to me! I'll never speak a word to you again without a dozen people in the room. Let me alone! Take your hand away!"

And she struck at my wrist with all her might, and flew away as though she were afraid I should run after her—I!

I can't write dissertations on my feelings; but I will admit that she gave me a bad time that night.

Next morning she didn't appear at breakfast. I didn't put myself out for that. Luncheon-time arrived, at the barbarous hour of half-past twelve. Rhoda was still absent; so also was Armstrong. Some comments were made in undertones. Well, I didn't like it; who would? I asked Mary if she knew where they had gone.

"No," says Mary, looking sanctimonious and important; "they don't take me into their confidence any longer." Silly little fool!

I lounged about all the afternoon, but they didn't turn up, not even for dinner. By this time I was getting pretty anxious—anxious for their safety you understand; I never, not for one weak instant, credited what all the old women were saying. It wasn't that I had such confidence in their integrity; I know that's a quality which, in youth,

is apt to give way under sudden stress of passion. But I knew that temptation wasn't possible between those two. No; what I feared was some piece of foolhardiness into which my smarting and reckless little Rhoda had dragged the idiotic Tom. I went down to the village and up to the church, inquiring everywhere; but nobody had seen them all day.

The pension went to bed at ten o'clock; we were kept to early hours by the moral suasion of *madame la propriétaire*. I leave you to picture the conversation in the salon that evening, with Mary in the centre of the group. They gave it up at last, and gave them up to perdition, and retired for the night. I didn't retire. If only I'd known where they'd gone, I'd have had search-parties out. Instead, I sat on my balcony and smoked, undergoing grinding torments, like Bradley Headstone; for Rhoda didn't come back until two o'clock.

She came alone, dead tired. I heard the little dragging footsteps coming down the hill in the stillness, and I knew who it was, though she certainly wasn't walking with her normal gait. I went down and opened the door, waiting just inside. In the half light I saw her come up the path, limping and drooping and wet through. She was so tired that she tumbled over the door-sill; but I intercepted the fall and caught her against my heart, and there she lay. I don't think at first she even knew who it was.

"You little goose, what have you been doing?" I said, when I saw that she knew me.

"Falling down the Zugspitze. Oh, dear! and I rather think Tom has broken his leg."

"And your guide?"

"We didn't invite any."

"Rhoda, you are a very great little fool!"

"I won't be scolded!" said she, shaking herself like a cat when you sprinkle water on it.

"You'll do what you're told. You'll get out of this wet dress while I forage for something to eat, and you will take

a hot bath, and then sit in the arm-chair and be waited on. And as a preliminary you will be carried upstairs."

"I won't!" she said. But she was, for I paid no heed to her remarks, and she was far too tired to struggle effectually. I deposited her in our sitting-room, and went away down to the kitchen. When I came back she had in my absence done exactly as I wished, and was sitting in her white wrapper, her hair tied loosely back with white ribbon. I arranged a table beside her, and I gave her her portion, and poured out her wine, and stood beside her while she submissively ate and drank. I felt that night that the power had passed to me, and I think she felt the same.

When she had eaten enough I made her tell me the whole story—she looking up with her harebell eyes! I could see her hand shaking as she sat. She had got up at three o'clock, roused Tom by throwing stones at his window, and commanded him to come and climb the Zugspitze, a notoriously dangerous peak. I think Tom did not want to go, and Rhoda dragged him. They lost their way, and slid down ice slopes, and hung on the verge of precipices, and climbed cliffs, and dodged avalanches, and Tom was struck by a falling rock, and finished the descent at a crawl. She had left him at the first chalet, and herself come straight on here.

"Why," I asked her, "why didn't you stay, too?"

"I didn't like the look of the place," said she, hanging her head.

"You could surely have put up with it till morning."

"I thought people would be anxious."

"Many, or me?"

"I didn't want—I thought you might think . . ."

"That you had gone off together? No, you baby! I never thought that."

She tossed her head, sending her curls flying into my face: I was leaning over the back of her chair. I bent down lower and laid my hands on her shoulders. I had prepared plenty of things to say, but they all departed. I whispered, "Rhoda, Rhoda, come to

me." She wanted to get away, but I wouldn't let her; then she put back her head and looked into my face with frightened eyes. "You must come. I want you, Rhoda. I love you. I love you!" I repeated under my breath.

I don't know how often I said it. Heaven knows what I said—I don't. But I know I never raised my voice above a whisper. You, Frank, were you ever brazen enough to make love in your natural voice? I couldn't; and I couldn't stop when I'd once begun. You can't think what it was like to have that indomitable elf barring me from her by the courage in her eyes, yet listening to every word, and feeling every modulation in my thought as keenly as the violin feels the touch of the bow. At last she stopped me and stood up, moving a few steps away.

"You say you love me," she said. "Did you say that to Pearl?"

"Never."

"Did you ever say it to any other woman?"

If I had, I'm sure I must have owned it; but with a clear conscience I could tell her "No."

"If—if I listen to you, will you ever say it again to any other woman?"

"No," said I again, stepping forward. But she wouldn't have it yet; she waved me back.

"Think. I don't mean only while I'm with you; but if I died, or went away, could you keep to me then? Could you? I won't share with anyone. You must tell me the truth."

"Shall I make you a promise?"

"Yes; promise."

"I promise that as long as I live——"

"And in the next world, too," she supplemented.

"And in the next world, too, I'll love no other woman nor make love to other woman. Will that do for you, you jealous baby?"

"You'll always like me better than Pearl?"

"Pearl!" I said, and laughed.

"Roses fade," she said. "Pearls last."

"I'd rather have you for an hour

than Pearl for a lifetime. Is it enough?"

"Yes," she said, with a nod and a half-smile, yet still withdrawing herself, putting out her hand to ward me off.

"Rhoda!" I said, pleading. If you could have seen the sweet aerial softness of her yielding! Well, I may as well get on and finish. "Do you love me?" I asked, when I had kissed her.

"I have loved you all along. That's why I did it," she answered.

"Did what?"

"Nothing. I don't know."

There it was again, that strange note which was always intruding!

"Rhoda, you changeling," I said, "who are you?"

"I don't know. I truly don't, Jim!"

"You often say things which imply a great deal, and you never explain them."

"I can't explain them. I don't know why I say them; and when I try to think I can't see anything. It's like—like a star in the first twilight: if you look directly at it you can't find it, but if you look away you can see it out of the corner of your eye. Yes, it is just like that. Don't scold me—don't! now that you have me and I can't defend myself any more——"

Well, I had that evening; I'm not going to grumble.

I used to go down to the lake every morning to bathe. I went down as usual next day—yesterday, so it was!—and came up expecting to find Rhoda ready for breakfast, but she wasn't in the salon. I went up to summon her and met her on the stairs.

"Shamefully unpunctual, as usual! Are you tired, baby?" I said, taking my toll of kisses.

"Yes, I think I am," she said doubtfully. "I think I'm not very well today."

"That's the result of your sins. You'll have to make your apologies to Mary, Rhoda, my child."

"Rhoda?" she repeated. I knew

the whole truth as she said it. I can't tell you what it was like.

"Do you prefer to be called Pearl?"

"I never have been Rhoda; but I do not mind, if you wish it, James."

"No, no; Pearl let it be."

The queer part was that I felt as though I'd foreseen it all along, which I hadn't; I'd never given it a thought. I was equal to the occasion; Pearl wasn't. She wouldn't eat her breakfast; I dare say she was suffering a good deal from Rhoda's bruises. I dare say you'd think I felt confused by the change in her identity, but it wasn't so. The other people all said she looked ill—look here, I can't write any more about it; use your imagination.

I didn't question her; I didn't want to. But I suppose she was puzzled herself to wake up in that strange place, among strange people, who claimed acquaintance and scolded her, some of them, for doing things which had never entered her head. It was like that elf Rhoda to vanish just when she'd left Pearl in hot water. Anyway, Pearl came to me rather piteously, saying, "James, I—I must speak to you; I can't remember what I've been doing. I can't remember anything clearly. What is it that's wrong with me?"

I said, "You've been rather unlike yourself" (rather unlike! Heaven forgive me!) "for some time past. You got a knock on the head which upset you. Don't bother about remembering; we'll get away from all these inquisitive fools."

"I seem to remember a struggle—a long, long struggle," she said, putting her hand to her head. "What was I like, James?"

"You were excitable and queer. You insisted upon being called Rhoda, for one thing," I had to tell her that; it was the only name Mary Armstrong knew her by, and all the people there.

"Rhoda?" she repeated. "Did I really? How strange!"

"Do you know any Rhoda?"

"Only my little twin sister who died. She was privately baptized Rhoda Margaret, and I was named after her;

mother always speaks of her as Rhoda, to distinguish her from me. I don't know why I chose that. I don't care for the name. I like Margaret much better."

"You don't know what your sister was like?" I asked idiotically.

"Why, James, she only lived a day! I wish she had not died; I should so have loved a sister. Mother says she fought for her life, poor little soul!"

"I'll be bound she did."

"You're talking strangely today, James," said my wife; and she took up my hand and softly kissed it. I drew it away; Pearl looked wounded.

"I'm sorry," I said hastily. "I sprained it yesterday, and it's rather tender."

"I thought you didn't like me to do it."

"My dear child, why on earth shouldn't I?"

"Nothing; I'm stupid. Only I'm so tired today—and silly——"

And with that may I be shot if she didn't put up her face for a kiss. I simply didn't see it; it was the only way. I patted her head and told her to

go and lie down. Do you think my little changeling would have called that love-making? She might have; she was jealous enough to say anything. But it wasn't.

All this happened yesterday. I didn't kiss Pearl good night; I staved it off by saying I had a cold. You may laugh, but I give you my word that I made myself sneeze by smelling the pepper-pot. Still, I can't keep her at arm's length much longer without coming to an explanation. Here's my dilemma, then: Pearl loves me; she's my wife, and I am pledged to her in honor. At the same time I'm pledged to Rhoda. That promise I can't break—nothing will induce me to! Yet I can't keep it without wronging Pearl. What's to be done, then? What would you do, in my case? I wish I could wait for your advice, but it's impossible. I must do what I think right, and take my chance; and I can't say I'm sorry.

I shall post this on my way down to the lake for my morning dip. Rhoda used to be always prophesying cramp, on these chilly mornings; but I can't say I have the slightest fear of that!



DROUGHT

By Emma A. Lente

THE little spring has gone dry!
The sun and the wind came to drink,
And the children dipped over the brink;
The heat drifted down from the sky—
And the spring of sweet waters went dry!

The spring of the heart has gone dry!
Love bore a cup, brimming, away,
And withering care came to stay;
Hot winds from the desert swept by—
And the spring of sweet waters went dry!

THE REGENERATE

By Mazo de la Roche

NINE o'clock brought the gasoline launch panting eagerly across the channel at Pointe au Baril, and at sight of it the lazy groups on the wharf broke into anxious activity.

Men, wearing yellow oilskin jackets and aggressively unshaven faces, hurried here and there, collecting their bait, their cooking utensils, and their Indian guides, who regarded the scene with good-natured tolerance, only now and then indulged in smothered laughter as some over-zealous fisherman plunged by, laden with paraphernalia.

In the midst of this cheerful bustle Lee Meredith tripped down the wharf, rustling in her crisp blue linen frock. She approached a weather-beaten old Kentucky colonel appealingly.

"Oh, Colonel Woods!" she cried, "I am in such misfortune! Papa has one of his attacks this morning—the fried salmon yesterday, I think—and he absolutely refuses to enter a boat to-day. This is our last day. It is so disappointing. Colonel"—she lowered her voice in liquid cajolery—"dear, good colonel, is there a wee bit of room in your boat for a poor orphan? Papa says you are such an old friend he will trust me with you, if you are willing."

It would have taken a harder heart than the one that beat under the colonel's old gray sweater to resist the pleading of Lee's blue eyes.

"Dear young lady," he said, tucking her arm through his, "the honor is all mine. We shall have the biggest catch in the party. Hi!" to a group of young men, "hide your heads, you young chaps! Miss Meredith has chosen me as her escort for the day."

"Who is the chaperon, you frivolous young things?" demanded one of them.

"Our friend Nanabosh, to be sure," replied the colonel, indicating him with a wave of the hand. "Who could be giddy with John at the helm?"

John Nanabosh was the best guide in Pointe au Baril. He knew the deep waters of the Georgian Bay better than any other Indian; the haunts of the wily and plump black bass, the channels where the salmon raced, and the quiet rivers where the sturgeon lay. He was taciturn as a Dutchman and independent as a millionaire; but he and the old colonel were fast friends and had fished together for eight seasons with unvarying good-luck.

It was ill for the ambitious fisherman to whom John took a dislike. Many a one had he rowed all day long with tireless fat arms while the unsuspecting victim put out his trolling line and drew it in with blistering fingers.

"Huh!" John would grunt sympathetically, "fish no bite today. Storm comin'."

But if the object of his dislike were a stranger to the lakes, John would let him catch pike, and grunt admiringly as he hauled in their big, limp bodies. Great was the joy of the fisherman as he climbed stiffly out of his boat at the wharf and proudly indicated his catch, and great indeed was his chagrin when he discovered how lightly the pike were valued.

"Why, great Scott!" the initiated would declaim scornfully, "there's more sport in that little bass," holding up a two-pounder, "than in your whole bally mess o' pike. Give them to your

guide, man, and keep away from that hole in future!"

Then John Nanabosh would paddle away, the bow of his canoe weighed down with pike, which he would sell for a cent a pound to the packers.

When Lee descended into the boat assisted by the colonel, John Nanabosh scowled black disapproval out of his fat little eyes. During the whole course of his acquaintance with the colonel no female had ever set foot in their boat. The colonel motioned him to his place, but John shook his head.

"No," he said thickly, "not go. You take white squaw—go fishin' 'lone. John not go."

"Good heavens!" gasped the colonel, "you're not in earnest, John?"

"Not go, by damn!" he repeated. "White squaw bring bad luck. Fish no bite. I know a man wants good Hinjun. Fish with him, I guess."

He made as though to walk away, but the colonel caught his arm.

"You old scamp!" he roared, "I've a mind to punch you. White squaw, by thunder!"

But in the depths of his own heart he sympathized with John, though he would not acknowledge it, even to himself.

"Oh, Colonel Woods, please let me out!" cried Lee. "I cannot think of spoiling your day. Really, it is rather humiliating. One would think I were a sort of Jonah!"

She turned on the Indian angrily, her Southern accent broadening in her excitement. "You are an ungrateful wretch, John Nanabosh. And after I have taken such an interest in your family, and the little red shoes and— and things I have bought for your papooses! Thank goodness, your wife shows more amiability; she has named the last one after me, Lee Nanabosh!"

The colonel tugged his mustache to hide a smile, and the group that had gathered about them laughed outright. But there were tears in Lee's eyes and John Nanabosh was touched. He remembered also that she was an American and very rich.

"I know what!" he said suddenly.

"I got nephew—young Simon. Very good boy. Not afraid white squaw. He row her. She fish near us. You pay me four dollars. Very well, hey?" He beamed ingenuously at them.

"It is an inspiration, John!" cried Lee gaily. "Your grasp of the situation is positively masterly. But let us be quick—we shall be the last in line as it is."

The launch was indeed emitting fierce snorts of suppressed energy, and the ten rowboats attached to one another by ropes in her wake were already packed with their freight of fishermen, guides and provisions.

The boats containing Colonel Woods and Miss Meredith were the last to fall in, and as John made fast Lee's boat and the first thrill of motion ran along the rope, a tall young Indian slid down to the seat in front of her as though he had delayed his entry till the last possible moment.

Those on the wharf shouted their final good-byes to those in the boats, the launch, circling widely, swung the string of small craft behind her as a big boy swings the little ones in a game of crack-the-whip; then she struck up the channel, passed the lighthouse and caught the first freshness of the breeze from the Georgian Bay.

In the bay itself all was blue quiet above and blue motion below, made up of little glancing waves. Far away on the horizon loomed Black Bill Island, and toward it a group of "Mackinaws" were headed, like a flock of tropical birds with their high-peaked, dark-red sails.

Drawing her hands through the cold water that raced by the boat, Lee turned from the landscape with a contented sigh, and examined her guide. She was interested in Indians.

He was a thin young fellow, yet sinewy, and he showed in a degree, rare for these days, the unconscious savage grace of his forefathers. His features were clear-cut and aquiline, and his dark hair lay in thick locks about his small, well-shaped head. His torn shirt revealed here and there his clear brown skin. The black line of his

lashes was very distinct as he looked down at his slender hands, hanging limply between his knees.

Lee studied his face with a great deal of interest. He approached more nearly her Ideal Redman than any she had yet discovered, and she felt a thrill of pleasure in the thought that he was hers for the day.

"So you are young Simon?" she said. "And fortunately for me, you are not at all afraid of white squaws."

"Oh, no," said young Simon simply. "I am taught at Sunday-school by one."

Sunday-school! Lee groaned inwardly at the inappropriateness of it. This young savage with his eagle face and somber eyes, poring over the catechism and singing infant class hymns! Inwardly she groaned but outwardly she smiled, and young Simon marveled at her dimples.

"Then, as you go to Sunday-school, you have, of course, heard of poor Jonah. I must confess that this morning I have a fellow-feeling for him, and I am keeping an eye open for my whale. Do you think a sturgeon would do, Simon?"

Simon looked puzzled. Then he said—his voice was low and muffled:

"You are not like Jonah. You are too beautiful. You are like Rebecca, or perhaps Rachael."

"Do you think a man would serve seven years for me, Simon?"

"Well," Simon answered, looking at her intently, "a Jew might, but I think not an Indian. Of course," he added hurriedly, as he caught a slight flush on Lee's cheeks, "I know you would not *consider* either. You are an American. I mean—I cannot very well explain—but when an Indian loves a woman he wants her very much and right away. He would wait seven years for revenge, but not for love."

He busied himself with winding a reel to hide a momentary confusion, while Lee leaned over the gunwale, staring reflectively into the green and amber depths below.

When she looked up again Simon's

dark eyes were fixed on her anxiously.

"I was going to say," he explained, "that I would not call a lady a white squaw; that is only my uncle's way of speaking. He does not know much English. You see, he has never been to Sunday-school."

"There is no need to apologize," said Lee, laughing lightly, and Simon marveled at the whiteness of her teeth. "To tell you the truth, I rather enjoyed the epithet. It was such a refreshing contrast to the way I am usually addressed. I perceive," she added more seriously, "that you learn, not only piety, but deportment, and—other interesting things from your teacher. You are an apt pupil, I fancy."

Simon's face lit up intelligently.

"Oh, yes," he said. "It is not only at Sunday-school that I learn, but every evening, after the lamps are lighted, my teacher—she is the minister's niece—reads history with me, and 'Wonders of the Heavens,' and 'Light Science for the Young.' Once we read 'Which Loved Him Best?' That was fine, but we did not tell the minister! My teacher, Miss Murray, says I am very intellectual—that is, clever, you know. She is going to raise a subscription to send me to college, so I may become a missionary."

A missionary! Lee regarded his daring profile, his light and agile body made for deeds of reckless bravery, and her anger rose against the woman who wished to clothe this gloriously primitive being in a black waistcoat and choker, and arm him with sentimental tracts for his heathen brethren.

She laid her hand on his knee and looked at him imploringly. For the third time young Simon marveled. Now it was at the tender gray-blue of her eyes.

"Don't," she pleaded. "Please don't. It would be such a waste. There are plenty of boys who look like missionaries; but you"—her eyes swept him—"you are such a perfect type of a young savage! All you lack is a crest of feathers in your hair, a dash of war-paint on your cheeks, and at your belt a

tomahawk; and with that eagle nose and the poise of your head—you would be magnificent!"

"And you—would you admire me then?"

She smiled into his eyes.

"Admire you? I should just fall down and worship you! Simon"—confidentially—"between you and me, I am sick to death of frock-coats and compliments and seeming to be what I am not and almost forgetting what I am. I long to shake it all off and be free. Papa says all women are savages at heart, but he does not understand and neither can you. But I must speak to someone and—of course, you think me quite crazy——"

"You are not happy. I understand," replied Simon.

They had now come among the islands, and with a last defiant snort the gasoline launch came to a standstill, and the Indians speedily loosed the connecting ropes of the boats in preparation for the day's sport.

John Nanabosh turned to his nephew and grunted a few words in Indian.

"What does he say?" asked Lee.

"He says to follow them, but not to get in their way," answered Simon.

"Tell him," said Lee, "that we are quite able to look after ourselves and that we intend to have an enormous catch in spite of him."

She was very fond of fishing and was full of pleasant excitement as the colonel pointed out the course they were to take, and arranged her tackle for her. He warned Simon to keep within close range of them and to take excellent care of her.

"You have a precious cargo, young Simon," he said. "If anything happened to Miss Meredith, why, my life wouldn't be worth living. Watch out for squalls and don't let her fall overboard if she hooks a minnow, d'ye hear?"

Lee let her troll out slowly, and Simon pulled the oars with short Indian strokes. He followed the course of his uncle about twenty yards in the rear, around a barren and rocky island that had been burnt over and the spire-like

crest of which was now topped by a few charred pines. About its base were many loose rocks scattered into the water, and around these slim green rushes had put up for shelter. There were deep holes near the island and Simon said the black bass knew it well.

However, before he had pulled a dozen strokes, there came a sharp jerk at the line, then a few heavy tugs at short intervals, and Lee predicted truly enough that she had hooked a pike.

She held him out to Simon, hanging glassy-eyed and limp from her hands.

"Poor Kenozha!" she said. "Shall I let him go?"

"He is pig enough to grab your hook a second time."

"Oh, but that's the fortune of war. Do let him go!" she urged.

So, with deft fingers, Simon slipped the hook from the flesh where it was buried, and the pike, without unseemly haste, slid back into the green depths, leaving a thin line of red in its trail.

As they turned a point of the island the other boat came into view and the colonel triumphantly displayed a small-mouthed bass.

"What luck!" he sang out.

"Just a call from my whale, but I sent him back to grow," replied Miss Meredith.

But her blood was up and she fished to such good purpose that when the colonel signaled them to draw in she had landed six fair bass.

As she was winding her reel the line jerked heavily and with a desperate plunge the pike was again brought up in the net.

"By the nine gods of War!" cried Miss Meredith delightedly. "It is Kenozha, the pike!"

"Sure enough," said Simon. "There's the old tear, and this time he has swallowed the minnow and three hooks." He looked shyly from under his lashes and then, "He was a Jew, all right," he said.

They drew in for luncheon by a low, green island with a level, grassy space that served for a table. Young Simon built an Indian stove of flat stones;

and the bass which an hour before had been romping in the lake were deftly skinned by John, rolled in cornmeal and consigned to the hissing pan. Richly crusted and flaky-white inside, it was a tempting dish that was set before the colonel and Miss Meredith. Also came potatoes boiled with their jackets on, vast slices of blueberry pie and coffee whose aroma was borne finely to the nostrils from the steaming pot.

The guides carried their own meal to a smooth sand-strewn rock, where they chewed meditatively in absolute silence.

When their hunger was appeased and the colonel was puffing contentedly at his pipe Lee drew his attention to the fine physique of young Simon.

The colonel nodded approvingly.

"You're right," he affirmed. "A chap like that makes other men seem puny. He looks as though the noble red man of fiction were regenerate in him. Quite a contrast to his pudgy uncle, isn't he?"

"Yes, they stand there, the Degenerate and the Regenerate! If Simon only knew, if we could only teach him to be what Nature intended—a primal savage, and, as you say, a regenerate. I would feel that I had done something of real artistic value. It would be the saving of a type."

The colonel looked at her with smiling old eyes.

"I should not think that would be difficult," he said. "In fact, you have no idea how regenerate I feel when I see you sitting there in that blue dress with your hair all ruffling up like little sun-kissed waves."

"Colonel," said Lee severely, "must I call the chaperon? And moreover, I object to the simile—my hair is *not* blue."

"Neither is the lake," persisted the colonel. "Just now, it's a golden, glowing, sandy hue, not at all unlike your hair. As for Simon, he will not be the first fisherman who has been made a missionary, and if I mistake not, *his* name was Simon, too. It's a

coincidence—fate, you may call it, Miss Meredith."

He rose and tapped the ashes from his pipe.

"Now, what do you say to a little still-fishing off that point? Feel how the air is cooling and how gently those ripples beat time! Methinks it is an auspicious moment, my Piscator."

But Miss Meredith had had enough fishing for one day, and she announced her intention of lounging on the rocks with her book for an hour.

"Simon will get anything I want, and you are within a whoop and a holler, as we say in the mountains down home." So she settled it.

Lee stretched out with her book before her, but her eyes lingered on the lake, now at its peaceablest, more often than on the page.

The island was very still. The old black rock was warm and up through a crevice a blueberry bush had grown, whose frosted berries clustered near her hand. She touched it caressingly. "Poor blueberry bush, they would plant you in a red flower-pot and call you a geranium."

She wondered sleepily where Simon was, and in her fancy saw him, bow in hand, gliding through the woods after his prey. Suddenly his hand is raised to his ear, an arrow cuts the air and a bird falls, fluttering, to the rocks. With his dark face alight with pleasure, he strides back to where one waits whose dusky locks fall about her smooth, brown shoulders. He lays it at her feet.

There was the dry crackle of a dead branch, the bushes parted and Simon's stalwart figure filled the opening. From his hand hung a dead gray gull.

"See," he said, holding it up, "it has been wounded. It flew here to die——"

"Simon!" interrupted Lee ecstatically, "your entrance was positively dramatic! I had just been weaving you into a dream; you were to enter carrying the spoils of the hunt, your bow in hand, and, *voilà!* here you are! But where is the bow? How careless of you to forget it!"

"I did my best," said Simon. "I stuck this in my belt. I thought it would please you." He displayed, rather shamefacedly, a small hatchet, used in the boat for killing the larger fish. "You see," he added in explanation, "I could not help hearing what you said to Colonel Woods about me. Your voice carries well."

She blushed with pleasure.

"I am touched, Simon, really, that you should care—like that. And you make such a picture standing there, with the green of the firs for a background and that intense look in your eyes." She sprang suddenly to her feet and laughed gaily. "Simon, oh, Simon! I have an idea! It is magnificent."

"I shall transform you into a proper savage while you wait. Quick! Pull out the longest feathers from the gull's wings and I will make a headdress for you—then your cheeks may be painted and your hair rumped. Simon, you must try to *feel* the part! Swell out your chest and cultivate a lust for blood. Oh, if you only knew how savage *I* can feel!"

She dragged him to a fallen tree and made him sit still while she fashioned a sort of crown of feathers in his hair. She found some berries, such as squaws use for staining their baskets, and losing herself in her enthusiasm she energetically rubbed the color from these into his brown cheeks. Nor did she feel how hot they grew under her touch nor see how glowingly his eyes looked up to hers.

The blood mounted to Lee's face when she stepped back to get a better view of her handiwork. It seemed not so much a transformation she had worked as a creation. Simon rose and faced her.

The crest of feathers above his brow gave an added height and pride to his bearing; the red of his cheeks seemed repeated in his eyes, as though a smoldering ferocity in them had leapt into flame.

Her heart beat quickly as she shook off a momentary flash of fear, and sweeping him a low curtsy she said lightly:

"The noble redman breathes again in you! Chief of the North, I kiss your hand."

For a moment Simon stared at her, standing motionless, his underlip caught in his teeth and his hand resting on the hatchet at his side. Suddenly he snatched it from his belt and brandishing it above his head he stood poised so, incarnadined in the light of the setting sun, then, throwing back his head, he emitted a yell, so fierce, so blood-curdling, that Lee, in terror at the sound and sight, pressed her hands to her ears and shrieked wildly.

In an instant he had flung the axe to the rock and was at her side, shame-stricken.

"I did not know what I was doing," he said hoarsely. "My God! I didn't! It was a sort of challenge for you, I think. I do not understand. It was wrong."

"It was splendid," sobbed Miss Meredith. "But so sudden. I think I feel like Pygmalion when Galatea stepped from her pedestal." The sound of hurrying steps came to them and she added tragically, "The colonel! It is the colonel!"

"Thank heaven!" gasped the poor gentleman, "I am in time."

He clutched Simon by the collar and shook him furiously. "You scoundrel!"

"Colonel, poor, dear colonel, it is all a huge joke!" said Lee, laughing through her tears. "Simon and I are playing Indian. *Rien que cela!*"

"*Rien que* the devil! It is a little past a joke to frighten your friends into fits, young lady. Take off those traps, you Indian, and get to your boat. The launch has whistled twice." He strode angrily down the rocks, cracking his leg with his fishing-rod.

Lee and Simon followed like children detected in some mischief; she, taking the rebuke with unwonted docility, for she was more frightened than she cared to own.

Simon was not visible while they were making their preparations to embark and when he reappeared all outward traces of his transformation had been removed, but Lee noticed

that his nostrils were dilated and when he helped her to her seat he gave her fingers a quick pressure as though of reassurance.

The two boats were met by the launch and her train. Simon at once made fast the ropes and they swung into line.

It was almost dark except for a greenish bronze glow, aftermath of the sunset. Against it the rows of islands showed, richly wooded, the narrow channels between them leading like silver aisles to the altar in the West. The moon hung low, but gave no light as yet; only her broken reflection was tossed to and fro by the waves. A heavy sea rolled.

Lee's boat plunged forward by a series of jerks and she caught momentary glimpses of the launch as it rose panting on the crest of a wave.

It was too dark to distinguish the features of her companion, but his attitude seemed to express a certain watchfulness and he frequently peered into the dusk, as though to make sure of his bearings.

A wave broke on the gunwale and dashed against her. She gave a little cry. Simon slid to her side, crouching in the space between the seats.

"You are my darling," he whispered, "you are my dearest darling. I will wreak vengeance"—he struggled with the store of words gained by his reading for a suitable phrase—"I will wreak vengeance on thy enemies."

So astounded was Lee at this outburst that speech failed her; twice she tried, but the words would not come. Then she pushed him from her and cried wildly, "How dare you? How dare you?"

Simon struck his hand into his palm.

"I dare anything. I dare this—watch me!"

He crept to the bow and knelt there while he felt for something at his side. There was a furtive gleam of steel as he drew his hunting-knife. It had scarcely flashed into Lee's consciousness what he was about to do when he bent forward and with a swift movement of his arm drew the blade across the

connecting rope with such force that it was severed clean at the first stroke.

At the same instant a wave crashed against the bow, sweeping them backward and almost throwing Lee from her seat. The boat reeled from the shock, turned dizzily in the trough and then righted itself—free, with the string of boats slowly crawling into the dark like a black snake with one fiery eye.

Lee's anger was turned to sickening fear. She sprang to her feet unmindful of the rocking of the boat and, making a trumpet of her hands, screamed shrilly for help. The wind beat down her voice to a whisper, and seeing that help from that quarter was hopeless, she caught up the oars, fitted them with trembling hands in the locks, and pulled with all her strength.

At the first stroke a wave caught the blade of her left oar and wrenched it from her grasp. They would have been swamped but for Simon, who lifted her almost roughly from the seat and took the oars himself.

With a few strong strokes he steadied the boat, then leaned forward to Lee with a puzzled look on his dark face.

"Are you not glad?" he said. "Just think we are free. You shall never see those people again."

Lee felt that her only hope in combating this strange development lay in keeping outwardly calm, at least; so, though her cheeks paled, she spoke composedly.

"I can see, Simon, that you have placed a wrong meaning on what I said today—indeed, I can see now that I was to blame. I meant nothing like this. I was only regretting the loss of a *type*, you understand; I did not think of you as a—*a man!*"

"I do *not* understand," he answered. "You said you wished that the old Indian would be born again in me. It is. I am as much the savage as my people two hundred years ago. *They* did not ask the woman whether she were willing. They carried her off because they loved her. I love you—Lee. That is your name, I know.

Lee—my love!" He made as though to go to her, but she threw out her hands and screamed in fright.

"If you touch me I will throw myself into the lake. Oh, Simon, how can you be so ridiculous? Why, they will search for me—do you think my father will rest night or day? You will be imprisoned. What of your boasted savagery then?"

"You think me very silly. I shall not be caught. I have thought it all out. In a cove of Chief Island I have a canoe hidden. I will take you there and leave this boat floating bottom side up, so they will think we have been drowned. Tonight I will take you to the island which no white man knows. My uncle has shown me. There are ways, there are channels, there are deep, deep woods, which none but our family know." He gave a low laugh in pleasant contemplation of his plans: "Oh, we shall be hidden safely! Then, by night, we will travel, up through the lakes, always North, to the Northland. There are many to show us the way—but none to tell the way to those who seek us. And by then you will love me and we shall be so happy!"

"I had it from a trapper, a cousin of mine, that there are green valleys where the deer come in herds to feed; and little lakes, blue like your eyes, where the trout lie, shoulder to shoulder, and are not afraid." He took her hands in his and went on gently: "Will you come, beloved? After all, I am civilized, I think, for I cannot bear that you should not want to come."

Lee let her hands lie in his and looked quietly in his eyes.

"Listen, Simon," she said. "I did you wrong, but you must not wrong me. What you say sounds like a fairy-tale, but it is not real life. My father would certainly find you, and I think—I know he would kill you. As for me—" her voice broke passionately—"you—an Indian! I would as soon marry a negro!"

His hands gripped hers so sharply that it hurt. The moonlight falling

on his face showed a smear of red on one cheek that looked like blood. He spoke huskily.

"I almost struck you then. I am glad that I didn't, but I'm going to take you in spite of yourself. If you scream, I will tie something over your mouth; if you say you hate me, I will kiss you; if you throw yourself overboard, I will jump after and save you; if you call me a negro, I'm afraid I shall strike you. So come in peace."

Overcome by fear, Lee closed her eyes and tried to believe it was all a dream. She thought of her father's agony when her absence was made known, and she reproached herself bitterly for her wilfulness in coming.

When she looked again there, black in the moonlight, was Simon silently rowing, and the harsh outlines of the Chief Island looming ever nearer.

Simon picked his way with care now, for there were rocks fringing the sandy cove where his canoe lay. Lee strained her senses for some sign of life on the island, but it lay desolate and forbidding, its silence accented by the faint drumming of a partridge among the pines.

Once, as they slipped through the smooth water of the little bay, she burst into piteous entreaties to Simon, but his one reply was that he loved her; and this he repeated gently but finally, as though there were nothing more to be reckoned on. Only once he answered, "You made me what I am. Now you must pay." He struck the oars deep in the water for emphasis, sending up a shower of fiery drops. And then again, "I love you."

Gloomy as the island was, Lee felt relieved at the thought of leaving the boat, and she hoped desperately that when Simon stood on the rocks once more this madness—for it almost seemed that—would leave him.

Suddenly she was startled from her thoughts by the bulk of something, blacker still than the night, that rose before them.

"Take care, Simon," she cried, "take care! We are almost on a great rock—back water!"

But as she spoke she heard the deep voice of a man, and a light appeared above what she had supposed to be a rock and which she now perceived was a fishing-tug lying at anchor. The light beamed from a lantern held above the blond head of Giles Oldham, the owner.

"Lord 'a' mercy!" he ejaculated. "Who are you that slip onto honest folks that way? I'm a-settin' no net, I tell ye, but th' engine is out o' gear an' I needs lay up 'ere to tinker hup a bit." His eyes bulged in amazement when the ray of light touched the girl's face, but he expanded perceptibly, for he had thought to be cornered by the inspector in his black yawl. The lantern shone more tranquilly as his hand ceased trembling.

"So ho, Bill!" he sang out. "Let 'er daown! It's nobody but Miss Merrydith an' young Nanabosh—praise the Lord for that!"

Lee explained tremblingly that they had been parted from the rest of the company because of a rotten rope; and Giles at once offered to take them in charge. He lifted Lee in his strong arms to the deck of the *Grace G.* and made her comfortable in the wheel-house with a great fishy-smelling blanket and a cup of strong tea, while Simon stood by in deferential acquiescence.

Whatever the impediment to the progress of the *Grace G.*, it was now easily overcome by the honest Giles; and he instructed the half-breed Bill to put on full steam.

"It's well for you, miss," he said emphatically, "that you 'ad young Simon with you. 'E's as safe as a church, 'e is, an' the most civilized Injun I know. Why, they be goin' to make a missionary of 'im. 'E'll carry all before 'im, miss, won't 'e?"

"That he will," said Miss Meredith graciously.

The *Grace G.* made good time, and in half an hour the red shaft from the Pointe au Baril lighthouse shot across the channel; then the familiar shadows were loosened, one by one, from the blackness, and last—the wharf and the cheering crowd, and the sight of her father's white head and anxious face. Colonel Woods took possession of her at once and led her triumphantly to her father.

"Here, Meredith," he growled, "take her in tow. Thank heaven, mine are all boys—gad, no wonder your head is white, suh!"

It was with difficulty that Lee escaped from her friends and drew Simon aside.

She raised her eyes, all bright with enthusiasm, to his.

"It was magnificent," she said. "Now that it is all over and I am safe with papa, I can see that it is quite the most picturesque incident that has ever happened to me. At the time, you know, I was a little frightened, but now I can see that it was superb—perfectly splendid, in fact!"

She nodded and smiled at him, her fair hair blown about her piquant face; then, with a rustle of crisp linen, she was gone, and he was left alone in the group of stolidly staring guides.

Young Simon slid to his place in his uncle's canoe and plied his paddle with long, meditative strokes. When they were in the middle of the channel alone John Nanabosh laid his paddle across the gunwale and grunted. Simon did likewise. John spoke then in Indian.

"Why did you do it?" he demanded. "I knew the rope had been cut as soon as I looked at it, and I hid it so they would not see. For what did you do it?"

"I was trying to be what she calls regenerate," replied young Simon laconically, "but it is no use. I think I shall be a missionary, after all."



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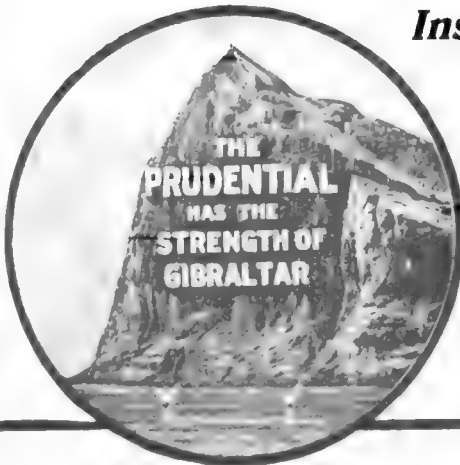
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Prevents Premature Gray Hair

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Ask your druggist for "the new kind"

Does not stain or change the color of the hair, even to the slightest degree.

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It has got all the vigor and vim of the vine;
No wines of French vineyards such virtues contain;
It's the joy of best judges—Great Western Champagne.*

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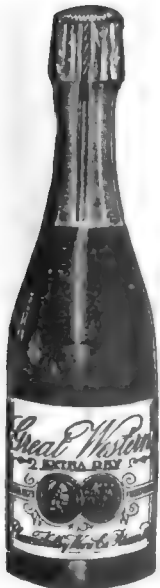
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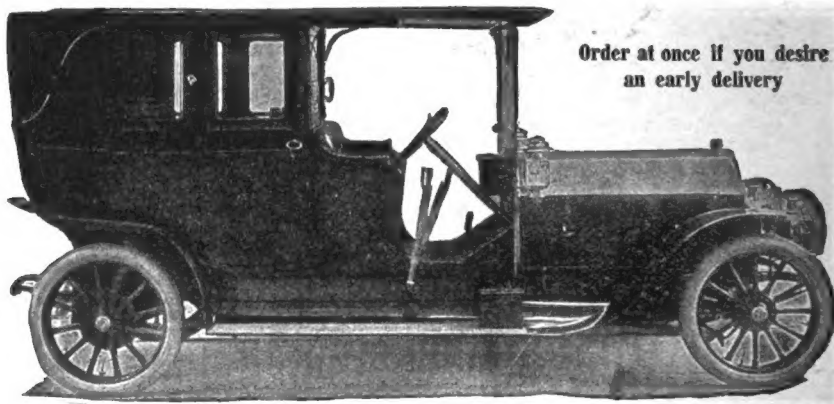
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